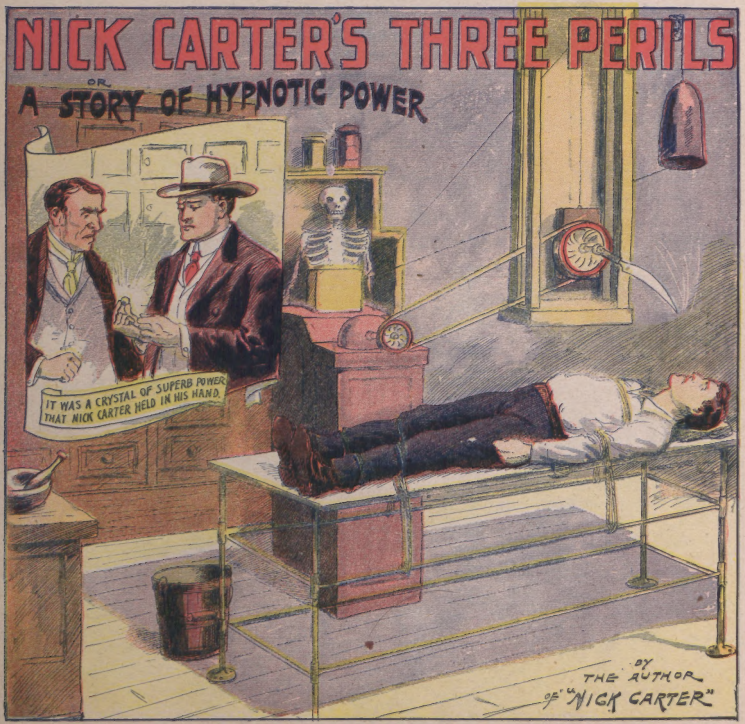
NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, *238 William St., N. Y.*

No. 365. *Price, Five Cents.*

NICK CARTER'S THREE PERILS

OR, A STORY OF HYPNOTIC POWER



Still the revolving knife descended, slowly! slowly! till it was so near Nick's face that he almost felt its sharp point, and even his brave heart sank before the impending horror.

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *238 William St., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1903, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 365. NEW YORK, December 26, 1903. Price Five Cents.

NICK CARTER'S THREE PERILS;

OR,

A Story of Hypnotic Power.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE AND TANGLED CASE.

Nick Carter looked thoughtfully at the speaker. He was an old man and one of the foremost bankers in the city. His head was bent, and he was evidently in deep trouble.

"I tell you, Mr. Carter," he said, "it is a startling thing that this bank, after so many years of successful management, should find itself in this position. We are being systematically robbed."

"I hardly know how to take this case," said Nick. "I am pretty busy, but I hate to refuse you."

"I shall be a pretty hopeless man if you do not take it up."

Nick looked at the old man again. He knew what it meant to him to have his last days clouded by such a discovery as this.

"I will take it!"

"You shall never regret it," said Mr. Ashmead, warmly.

"I must ask some questions, then," said Nick, "which may seem, some of them at least, not to bear very heavily on the case."

"I shall not attempt to judge of them," Mr. Ashmead said, with an expression of relief upon his face.

"In the first place, for the present please do not let any one know that I am engaged on this case. There are many reasons for this, as you can see."

"Certainly."

"How did you first discover that the books had been tampered with?"

"You see, I have a friend in Springfield, Mass., who entrusts to me the handling of a bunch of securities here, and he sent me a sum of money."

"How much?" asked Nick.

"There were thirty thousand dollars in this month's consignment."

"When did you receive it?"

"On Thursday, at about three o'clock. The express got in late that day. We did not get the funds until late, not till after the close of the banking hours."

"Who received the money?"

"My cashier, Mr. Peters, though it is my custom to attend to that matter personally. But as it was late and I had an important engagement for that afternoon, I intrusted him with the charge. In fact, he waited expressly for the money."

"You say that it was unusual for you to do this?"

"It was, for this was always a personal matter."

"How long has Mr. Peters been with you?"

"Nearly twenty years. He has ever been considered one of our most trusty men."

"Was the bank responsible for this money? What security did you give the bank?"

"My personal note; I have no reason to withhold anything from you, Mr. Carter," said the banker, "but it may be I have been wrong; I have not told the directors, but these funds were secured through the bank on my own personal paper."

"If you chanced to lose your fortune, Mr. Ashmead, and your friend should want his money suddenly, there would be a shake-up in the bank."

"But, Carter, I have more than three million dollars."

"Well, to get down to business," said Nick, "what was the first intimation you had that you had been robbed?"

"On Friday night I received notice that a widow, an old friend for whom I always transacted banking business, was on her deathbed. There were certain papers which, woman-like, she wanted to have in her own hands. Her physician advised me to humor her, and I went to the bank to get them."

"Naturally," Nick said, as Mr. Ashmead stopped.

"I jumped into a carriage, and, hurrying to the bank, went into a side door and went to the private vault where all of my books and accounts were kept. I took out the ledger to see just what date she had placed the securities in my hands, and to see what interest was due her, when I saw the name of my Springfield friend, and involuntarily turned to his account. I glanced at the bottom of the balances for the last month, and I could not believe my eyes! For there, in black and white, were the figures which were supposed to show our exact standing, but I knew that those figures were not correct, that some blunder had been made. I was astounded! Instead of my owing him some one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, as I knew I did, the book showed that I owed him only about one hundred and five thousand dollars."

"What did this mean?"

"It meant that if Peters had made a mistake and had not entered the business between us in its proper place, he must have entered it somewhere and thus balanced, for every trial for months had balanced."

"Did you investigate at once?"

"I went first to the dying woman, with the securities and the interest. Then I returned to the bank at once. I worked for over four hours over the books, but not an error could I find. But suddenly I stumbled upon a discovery which, you may suppose, Mr. Carter, almost upset me. I found that money had been entered directly upon the ledger and no mention made of it on the cash-book. We were being ingeniously and shrewdly swindled. I called Peters to account yesterday, and he has denied all knowledge of it, and seemed as shocked as I was. So now I have asked you to ferret out the miscreant."

Mr. Ashmead left the detective's office in better spirits than he entered. He felt that if any one could straighten out his business, Nick Carter was the man.

Nick stood looking thoughtfully after the carriage that took Mr. Ashmead away; as he gazed at it he saw, to his astonishment, that clinging to the frame behind was a dark form that resembled a man. So curled up was it, that it was difficult to tell what it was. Nick ran upstairs to his den and grabbed a package that was lying on the table. Undoing it as he ran down the stairs, he quickly snatched some articles of apparel from it, and when he reached the outside door he was completely disguised. To all appear-

ance he was a man of full fifty years old, with gray hair, a full beard and a rheumatic gait.

By the merest chance a cab was passing at the time. Nick hailed it and was soon catching up with the carriage which Mr. Ashmead had taken. Presently that carriage turned abruptly to the right and entered a broad street upon the east side of the avenue. When Nick's driver reached the corner, the detective directed him to follow in the wake of the advance carriage. They had scarcely turned the corner, when Nick grasped the driver's arm, for he was riding beside him, in order not to lose sight of anything that might occur.

"Pull up," he whispered, "for I must see!"

Nick sprang lightly to the ground.

"Wait for me here," he said, as he started toward the spot where the carriage stood. Suddenly he was startled by a wild scream from the driver of the banker's carriage.

"Help! Help! Murder!" came the cry as the hackman sprang back from the open door of the carriage and hastily snatched one of the side lights from its socket.

In an instant Nick Carter was beside him.

"What is the matter here?" Nick said, in a stern and commanding voice.

"Look and see," cried the trembling man.

A startling sight met Nick's eyes!

The inside of the carriage was spattered with blood. The cushions had been pulled from the seats and were piled upon a body which lay on the bottom of the carriage. The face alone of the dead man was visible. the face of Mr. Ashmead. It was strangely drawn, a look of perfect agony being upon the features.

"My God!" cried the driver, "what a crime!"

Nick himself felt terribly shocked. For as he drew one of the cushions away he saw plunged into the very heart of the old man a knife with which the assassin had done this horrible deed.

Aroused by the unwonted commotion, the inmates of the house had come to the door. A beautiful girl, the daughter of Mr. Ashmead, came running down the steps.

"What is the trouble?" she asked. "Is papa sick?"

Nick interposed his body between her and the carriage.

"You had better go into the house," he said, gently. "There is nothing that you can do here."

"Who are you?" she asked, quickly.

Nick took a step nearer and whispered in her ear.

"Why are you here?" she questioned, angrily. "There is no need of a detective here."

The driver heard her exclamation, and he looked at Nick in surprise, for he certainly did not much resemble the man he had seen looking at the carriage as he had driven Mr. Ashmead from the office of Nick Carter.

"It will be better in every way for you to go in," said Nick, patiently.

Just at this moment Mrs. Ashmead came to the bottom of the steps.

"What is the trouble, sir?" she asked, in a soft voice, as she gently pushed the girl back toward the house.

Before Nick could answer she caught a glimpse of the form lying in the carriage. As the rays of light from the lamp the driver still held fell upon that form she grew ashy white.

"John! My husband!" she cried, and fell forward. If Nick had not caught her she would have fallen face downward to the pavement. The cabman Nick had employed sprang forward and helped Nick carry her into the house. All this had been done so swiftly that the cabman had not looked into the carriage where Mr. Ashmead lay till now. He almost fainted as he saw the horrible sight, for in the dim light the face had taken on a most terrible expression.

"What does it mean?" he asked of Nick, who had come out of the house.

"It means a foul murder, and a good deal more than that!"

"Some one ought to call the police," said Nick's cabman.

Nick laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

"Do not be in haste," he said; "when I want them I will call them. For the moment I want to see what I can find."

The two drivers looked at him a moment in surprise.

"Nick Carter, as I live by bread!" whispered one.

Nick took in everything about the scene. He searched the carriage minutely. He found nothing. Suddenly a gleam of satisfaction lighted up his eyes. He stooped and picked up from the floor of the hack a shining object.

"I will find the fiend that struck that blow if it takes the rest of my life, which I do not think it will."

The first thing that Nick wanted to do, and in some ways the most difficult, was to keep the news of the murder out of the morning papers. This was almost an impossibility. Here were the two hack drivers and the excited household. The drivers were rather easily handled.

"Boys," said Nick, "if in the interest of justice you will say nothing about this to a soul to-night, to-morrow morning I will mail each of you, to any address you will give, a ten-dollar check."

They readily agreed. Then Nick went to the house and made somewhat similar agreements with the servants.

He had an interview with the stricken widow and a friend who had come in. It was all successfully managed. But not until the papers were out in the morning did Nick feel safe in regard to it.

Difficult as Nick found this, it was nothing to what he had yet to encounter in this strange and tangled case.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE BANK.

On the morning after the murder of Mr. Ashmead, and before the news of that terrible catastrophe had found its way to the ear of the public, a queer-looking man strolled along Wall Street. He was gazing intently at the various banks and offices, and at length he stopped before the Homemakers' Bank of New York.

He had evidently come from a good distance in the country, to judge by his rustic clothes and general air. The street boys said under their breath:

"See the rube!"

One, a little more daring, began to sing:

"Oh, Uncle John, ain't it nice on Broadway!"

But the old man did not pay much attention to them. He was intent upon the bank. Presently he went up the steps and opened the door.

"Be you the office boy?" he asked, as he went in and one of the boys quickly arose.

"I am, sir."

"Is the president of this institution in here?" asked the seeming farmer.

"I think," said the boy, politely, "that he is at home. He does not usually come down so early as this."

"Wall, I'll wait for him. I've got to see him. They can't no small fry do my business for me."

Just then a man about forty years old came hastily in. He passed quickly through the room.

"What's the matter with Mr. Peters?" said one boy to another. "I never knew him to go through without saying 'good-morning' before."

Cashier Peters called some clerks into the private room. In a moment they came out with pallid faces and trembling hands.

"Mr. Ashmead is dead!" one of them said to the boys, who were looking curiously at him.

"Dead!" they cried.

"Yes, dead—murdered! Mr. Peters called at his house this morning on some important business and was met by this awful news."

The men gathered about the room in little groups, talking it over. They were thus engaged when the old farmer—for such he appeared to all of them—arose and peered through the heavy screens toward the inner rooms.

Upon the right of the little vestibule which he saw, the main banking rooms were situated. There were windows on the street. But these were so closely barred that no burglar ever had attempted to enter. On the left were the offices of the bookkeepers and general accountants. All of this the man took in at a glance.

"Tell your cashier," said he to one of the boys, "that I want to see him."

The boy came back in a moment with a white face.

"Mr. Peters says he cannot see you now. Did you know, sir, that Mr. Ashmead is dead—murdered?"

"He will see me," said the old man, "for I have some business with him."

"But he told me not, sir, and I daresn't go back."

"You tell him that the gentleman from Springfield, Mass., who sent him the securities lately, wants to see him."

A moment later the boy beckoned the unwelcome visitor into the little side office where the cashier sat with bowed head resting on his hands.

"What shall I do! What shall I do!" he was saying as his visitor entered the room.

"Good-morning, Mr——"

"Peters," said the cashier.

"Doubtless you will pardon the intrusion," said the man, whose voice was no longer that of a green countryman, "when I tell you that I am here concerning the securities which Mr. Ashmead invested for me. Doubtless you will do me the favor of telling me just what he did with them, and what he bought for——"

"I do not recognize you at all," interrupted the cashier, looking fixedly at his visitor.

"Here is my card. I trust you will pardon me for not giving it to you sooner."

Nick—for, of course, it was Nick—handed the cashier a neatly engraved card with the name of their Springfield customer upon it.

The cashier read: "Mr. Hilary Hilton."

"Ah, indeed, Mr. Hilton," he said, "I am sorry that I cannot give you the information you desire. But I can show you just how the account stands. If you can draw deductions from that you may be able to get the information you want."

The cashier arose as if to leave the office.

"Perhaps," said the stranger, "that I had better wait for Mr. Ashmead himself."

"Is it possible you do not know? Didn't the clerks tell you?"

"Tell me what? What should the clerks tell me?"

"That Mr. Ashmead is dead—murdered!"

"Murdered! When was this crime committed?"

"Last night. He was on his way home."

For fully a minute the seeming Mr. Hilton stood as bereft of the power to speak.

"How was he killed?"

"Stabbed through the heart."

"When did you learn of this?"

"This morning. Only about an hour ago," he said.

"Who, who could have killed in cold blood a man like John Ashmead! The soul of honor! a gentleman and Christian!"

"I wish I could answer you," said the trembling cashier.

He arose from his chair as he spoke, and went toward the door of the outer office.

"I will get you the books you wish to see. But I cannot give you much information till I have an opportunity to investigate."

A moment later and Nick heard a smothered exclamation from the other room. The door swung open and Cashier Peters staggered in with his face whiter than death, and his knees fairly knocking together.

"My God!" he cried, in a hollow voice, "we have been robbed!"

He sank into a chair as his trembling limbs refused to support him.

"What's that you say?" cried Nick. He took the cashier by the shoulders and almost shook him.

"Robbed! Murdered! What do you mean by all this?"

The startled man pointed to the door of the other room.

"Look and see!" he said, in a husky voice.

Gathered about the doors of the main vault of the bank the clerks who occupied desks near by were standing. In their midst was a man about fifty years old who, by his acts and looks, quickly attracted Nick's attention.

"What is the trouble here?" asked Nick, with a tone of authority.

"Who are you?" several voices asked at the same moment.

"I am interested in the affairs of this bank. I am

here on business. Now tell me, what is the trouble here?"

"Look for yourself," replied the man who had especially attracted Nick's attention. "One glance will tell you more than words."

He stepped to one side as he spoke. As he did so the interior of the great vault was disclosed to Nick's view.

"Who opened this door?"

The voice was no longer that of the country rube! It was that of a man of power, one who at once had begun to pick up the tangled threads of a great crime.

"I opened it," said the elderly man.

"Was it your custom to do so?"

"It was. You do not suspect me, do you?"

Nick did not reply. He did not seem to hear the question. As he had stood in this room his mind had run rapidly over the events of the past night. He had spent it at the home of the banker. He had there found out that Mr. Ashmead had had a distinct and clear notion that his days were numbered. He had made his will. In addition to this he had written a strange little letter to his wife. Nick had read it over and over. He could repeat it. It was this:

"If at any time in the future you have reason to suppose that I keep watch over you and our daughter, do not doubt it. Just remember that the dead do return to protect their loved ones."

Nick had thought this the most uncanny message he had ever known of any man leaving. Mr. Ashmead had always been a sensible man. He was no believer in spiritualism, and Nick had pondered long over this message. He studied also the causes that might have led the banker to think he was not going to live long.

In the light of the facts Nick had ascertained, and from his knowledge of the science, he believed that Mr. Ashmead had been at the mercy of some man of almost superhuman will. In other words, that he had been hypnotized!

With the thoughts that naturally came to him in connection with this notion, Nick had looked at the men about him with great interest. He could determine nothing as yet.

As he stepped into the cash vault his eyes took in every detail at a glance. It was a perfect fort, so carefully was it guarded. It was a splendid piece of work. It was, it seemed, an impossibility for any man to open it without powers greater than most bank burglars possess. In the center was a steel encased safe.

"What is that for?" he asked.

"That is Mr. Ashmead's own private safe. It was used for nothing but his private business."

Nick gazed fixedly at the elderly clerk, who replied to the question.

"You gentlemen all know that Mr. Ashmead is dead before this?" questioned Nick.

All bowed gravely, with the exception of this peculiar elderly clerk. He looked in an almost defiant manner at Nick, as if to question his authority.

Nick gave orders that the bank doors be closed, that a placard be placed on the bank doors stating that owing to the death of the president it would be closed until a meeting of the directors could be had; that business would then be resumed.

There was some hesitation at obeying this order; but as the men consulted with Cashier Peters they came back to where Nick stood, evidently ready to do anything he should advise.

This move was of great importance to Nick. It would give him the opportunity of making the investigation Mr. Ashmead had asked of him just before he died.

Ten minutes later the bank closed its doors.

What was the secret of this man's death?

Had he been killed for revenge, or had he been robbed and put out of the way, so that the culprit could not be found?

These were the questions Nick Carter had to answer.

CHAPTER III.

A TERRIBLE ENCOUNTER.

James McWilliams was the name of the clerk who had seemed to take the lead of the others, by virtue of his age and of his ability. Nick was proceeding with

a strict cross-examination of him when he felt a hand laid upon his arm. Turning, he saw standing beside him, in an attitude of dejection, the cashier, Peters.

"Will you please come into my office with me a moment?"

Nick left McWilliams and followed Peters to his office, wondering what he had to offer. The cashier closed the door carefully.

"As God is my judge, I am innocent of this crime!" He looked Nick squarely in the face.

"Of what crime?" Nick asked.

"You are a detective, and of course you are on the trail of the murderer of Mr. Ashmead."

Nick wished he knew just when it had dawned upon Peters that he was a detective. Nick was inclined to think that he had known it from the start and had played a part all the time.

"Well, suppose I am a detective, and am on the trail of the murderer, am I far from him at the present time?"

"That I cannot tell you. I knew nothing of this till I went to the house this morning. I went according to instructions I received from Mr. Ashmead yesterday."

"What were your instructions?"

"He told me to call at his house early this morning, so that I could go over some business with him and get to the bank not later than ten o'clock."

"Did this business pertain to the Springfield man's money?"

"It did. Mr. Ashmead fancied that some mistakes had been made in the books; as I had no time to go over them then, he asked me to come to his house. He wanted me to be prepared to make a statement in regard to several entries which he claimed to have discovered in the wrong place in the accounts of the bank."

"Were you aware of the nature of these entries?"

"I was not. He informed me that between sixty and seventy thousand dollars was involved. It looked, he said, as if somebody had been tampering with the books of the bank in order to rob the institution."

"But you are positive that the books are all right?"

"I am sure that they are correct to a cent. Our trial balances have been perfectly vouched every month. We have never had occasion to doubt them."

"Will you get the ledger and let me see the account of the Springfield man?"

"I will see quickly," said Nick to himself, "if the statement which Mr. Ashmead made to me last night is correct."

A moment later he was startled by a cry from the other room.

Nick sprang to his feet, where he could command a view of the banker's safe, and in fact of the entire room beyond. Cashier Peters was kneeling by the safe and was busily engaged in working the combination of the banker's private strong box. The clerks were staring in amazement.

"What is the occasion of your surprise?" Nick asked of a young clerk, who stood near.

"Why, no one but Mr. Ashmead was ever known to open that safe, and now Mr. Peters seems to know the combination and is using it."

"Doubtless he obtained it this morning at the house," Nick replied, unexcitedly. But as he saw the expression of the cashier's face he knew that was not the case. The man's eyes were set in his head, and he seemed entirely unconscious of the existence of any one around him.

The safe was speedily opened! The door swung freely back. With a quick motion the cashier removed a heavy ledger from its resting place and rose from his position on the floor.

Suddenly Nick felt a strange and oppressive sensation.

Cashier Peters was about to take a step toward him when Nick felt his senses leaving him. He felt as if he had a strong dose of ether or some strong narcotic. His head swam, his ears sung and buzzed. The furniture seemed dancing up to the ceiling of the room.

With an almost superhuman effort Nick sought to resist the dread spell. Then, like a log, he sank to the floor. Some of the clerks sprang to his assistance, greatly startled to see him fall. This seemed a day of horror to them.

"Bring some water, quick!" said one who knelt beside Nick. But the man McWilliams waved them back.

"He will be all right in a moment," he said, and sure enough, before the words were fairly out of his mouth, the detective opened his eyes.

"What was it?" Nick asked, instantly himself again.

"You must have fainted," replied Cashier Peters. "The air is very close in here."

He gave orders to have the ventilators opened to their fullest extent.

But Nick knew well that he had not fainted. There was something more difficult to account for than a little bad air.

Turning to the cashier, he said:

"Bring the ledger into the office."

Without another word Nick left the room. He was certain now that he had been right in his supposition that hypnotism was at work. He had studied its manifestations. He knew that it was the will of some one who had felled him to the earth. But who was the man? The same who had controlled the actions of the cashier, when he had startled all the clerks by his unusual methods.

There was a great mystery here. How much did Mr. Ashmead know?

To find out this man Nick believed would reveal the author of the crime.

With a determination to get to the bottom of the affair, Nick looked with Peters over the accounts of the Springfield customer.

Sure enough, as the dead banker had said, the books showed that he owed him but a little over one hundred thousand dollars.

"Tell me, Mr. Peters," said Nick, "do you think this account would tally with the charges Mr. Hilary Hilton has placed against the banker's account?"

Peters hesitated a moment.

"Give me your honest, unbiased opinion," said Nick.

"I do not know! I thought it more."

He stopped as if some force outside of himself impelled him. Nick resolved to try the influence of his own powerful will upon the man. Nick had been told that he would have great hypnotic power if he had a mind to use it. He reached forward and hit the cashier a smart blow upon the shoulder and drew his hand quickly before his eyes.

Peters started and drew his brows together strangely.

"I feel sort of confused," he said, "sleepy or stupid."

"Listen to me," said Nick; "have you ever felt in this way before?"

"Mr. Carter, I have not felt like myself for some little time; I haven't been able to account for it."

"Do you think it possible that some one has induced you to perform certain acts without your immediate knowledge that you have performed them?"

"What do you mean? I cannot tell what I may have done. You cannot mean to hint that I am mixed up in these strange things about the bank!"

Peters appeared both indignant and hurt.

"I insinuate nothing," said Nick, "but I feel certain that you have been imposed upon. If you knew, I do believe, of the things that you have done in the past ten days, you would be as appalled as I am at the state of things!"

"What do you mean? The things that I have done? Tell me, Mr. Carter; don't keep me in suspense when I am almost frantic with all that has come to light."

"Where did you get that ledger? Tell me if you can, the combination of Mr. Ashmead's private safe!"

"I do not know the combination to the safe——"

The man sprang up from his chair, and throwing up his hands as if to ward off a blow, he turned his eyes upon Nick. Nick, seeing at once that the cashier was again under this influence of a master mind, stepped toward him and put out his hand. Peters jumped back, waving his hands wildly and crying:

"Go away from me! Don't touch me! You are possessed of a devil!"

His voice was heard in the next room, and the already excited clerks came to the door. McWilliams opened the door first, and in a tone of one in authority said:

"If you cannot talk things over with the cashier

without resorting to force, you had better leave the investigation to the officers of the bank."

Nick looked at him with a scornful expression.

"Never you mind," said Nick; "I can attend to my part of the affairs of this bank. My candid advice to you, my friend, is to give your undivided attention to the books outside there."

As Nick spoke there came into the eyes of this man a strange, sinister look which immediately suggested to Nick a great many things.

"Who are you, that you take charge of things here? The directors have not met yet: who gave you authority here?"

Nick did not answer, for although the cashier knew him and McWilliams must have suspected him, yet many of the clerks were in ignorance of his identity, and he wished this to be so.

Nick made a misleading answer.

"What time will the directors be here?" he asked, then.

"They have been telephoned for, and at least three of them will be here soon."

"I will be here," said Nick, "and will hold myself and no one else responsible for my actions here."

This satisfied the man, who went back to his desk where he seemed to be giving his entire attention to some books and papers.

Nick turned to make some remark to the cashier, when he saw that individual sitting, bent over in his chair, trembling as if he had a chill. His face had a troubled expression and his eyes were distended.

Nick had now not the slightest doubt that he was on the track of the real power beneath this crime. He decided instantly to say nothing more to Peters about the safe and his strange actions. He went up suddenly to the bookkeeper, and said:

"Will you step into the vault with me a moment?".

McWilliams arose at once and the two men were out of hearing of the rest in a moment.

"What is the matter with the cashier?" demanded Nick.

McWilliams shook his head sadly.

"I do not know. I never saw him act as he has today. It looks bad."

As Nick changed his position he glanced down to the floor. There, on the floor, near the door, he saw a shining object less than three feet from where he was standing.

At the same moment he felt that strange overpowering sensation that he had felt in the outer room. Quicker than a flash, Nick clasped his hands behind him. He had heard that this would break the hypnotist's power. Nick felt better at once, and turning toward his companion, he said:

"Mr. McWilliams, I think we understand one another." Nick stooped and picked up the shining object and slipped it into his pocket.

"The exact counterpart of the one I found in the carriage!" Nick whispered to himself.

It was a crystal of superb power to reflect light. As Nick held it in his hand it gleamed and glanced with all the colors of the spectrum.

With a glance that took in his entire surroundings Nick turned to leave the vault. He had made up his mind from every act, and now from the expression of the face of the man while with him in the vault, that McWilliams was a man whose character and life would demand investigation. McWilliams had stepped out of the vault, and Nick started to follow him, when suddenly he felt, rather than saw, an arm descending upon him. He sprang to one side and thus avoided a blow that would have been deadly. He caught a gleam of a knife, and instantly through his clothing it had pierced. His shoulder bore the brunt of the blow, which was powerful enough to send Nick to the floor. As he fell, the vault was enveloped in gloom, but he caught, bending over him with a fiendish look of joy, the face of the hypnotized Peters.

Nick heard at the same instant a sound which chilled the blood in his veins. The doors of the vault were closed!

The gas jet which had rather dimly lighted the vault was extinguished. The pain from the wound in his shoulder was sharp, and Nick felt himself growing faint, but the sense of his terrible danger, shut in here

with this madman, conquered the numbness he felt stealing over him. Nick arose from the half-crouching position he had been in. At that instant, with a cry of rage, the man sprang upon Nick. If it had been light Nick could have mastered him at once, but in the darkness it was almost impossible for him to escape from the lunges which the infuriated man made toward him with his deadly knife. As Nick felt the man's hot breath upon his cheek and caught even in the darkness the gleam of his eyes, the truth struck home that Peters was a maniac! His strength was like that of some great brute. Nick dodged the murderous blows as best he could. He knew that his only hope for life was to completely master the madman; but how was he to do it?

As Peters' arm descended upon Nick's shoulder for the second time Nick caught the arm and tried with all his own wonderful strength to wrench the knife out of the madman's hand. But with a wild yell Peters pulled himself loose and threw himself squarely upon the breast of Nick. Then began a terrible encounter. Nick's carefully trained muscles and superb strength were pitted against the brute force of an insane man, who held in his hand with a grasp of steel that murderous knife.

Once more Nick caught him by the arm, and this time he succeeded in throwing his arm about the madman's body and forcing his arm back, so that at last the knife was knocked out of his hand. Then, with a sudden turn, Nick twisted the man's body in such a way that for the time he was helpless.

Suddenly, as Nick drew a long breath, he noticed a burning odor. The gas which had been, as he thought, turned out purposely by the cashier, had evidently simply blown out, for it was filling the vault with its deadly fumes. Nick tried to work his way toward the fixture, but the lunatic was by no means powerless. He was struggling violently. Nick felt weak from the loss of blood. He realized that he could not hold out much longer against the combined powers of his deadly foe, the close air, and now the fumes of the gas! Nick was, of course, an expert wrestler, and he tried to master his man, but the effort was only to throw them both to the floor with force. Nick had fortunately landed on top, and his fingers now closed on the man's windpipe. Nick hoped he had silenced him for a time, and renewed his efforts to get to the gas jet. But in half a second Peters had sprung up and fastened his teeth into Nick's wrist. Nick's ears were ringing; he felt that a moment or two would decide his fate. With one last great effort he clutched Peters' throat again. Without remorse he clutched it, and as the man's body relaxed Nick, dragging him along, fearing to let go of him for an instant, reached the gas jet and was about to turn it off when the madman, with the cunning of insanity, grasped Nick's throat. Then Nick knew that he had been feigning. As he held Nick by the throat and Nick was gasping for breath, he heard the sound of something scraping on the wall of the vault. It was a match! With a supreme effort Nick wrenched himself loose from his assailant, and flinging himself upon him, there began another struggle. Nick knew that if loose again he would probably succeed in lighting a match and death was certain.

Nick nerved with his great desire to live, and summoning all his powers to his aid, threw the madman to the floor. His arms at last held the maniac in a close grasp.

"Peters, will you yield?" Nick cried.

"Who calls me Peters?" came the answer in a strange and unearthly voice. "I am not Peters. This is John Ashmead!"

This startling cry from the prostrate man almost completed the unnerving of Nick. The deadly gas was pouring in to the vault, and both would soon be beyond help. Nick realized this. While he still held the man down with his body, his mind was busy.

"Listen to me," said the now faint voice of Peters: "you cannot hurt me; I have died once! I am John Ashmead, the banker, you know. I will guard my treasure in death. I know all."

His voice died away in a feeble wail. Nick sprang up and groped his way to the almost fatal gas jet and to his joy he found it and turned it off. Then, as the man lay silent, he began to try to find some way out

of the vault or to make some sound that would be heard. But all in vain.

Then Nick felt that his last hour had come! He could not breathe, it seemed to him. He felt himself sinking down, down to a bottomless pit. There was no more hope.

Nick knew no more.

Time had no more existence for him.

Then again Nick Carter heard voices. He felt the sweet fresh air about him.

He raised his head to listen. He opened his eyes. He was in the world still. As he opened his eyes he saw a well-known physician bending over him.

Nick felt terribly weak, but his mind was perfectly clear.

"How did you come here?" he asked. "How did I get out?"

"Never mind about all that," said the doctor. "You are all right now. That is all that is of any consequence."

Nick was lying on a lounge in the directors' room at the bank.

He looked vaguely around for a moment, then it all came back to him—the horrible struggle with the madman—the deadly gas, and all.

"Where is Peters?" Nick asked, faintly.

"He is dead. His condition was such that he could not stand the gas as well as you could."

The doctor thought it was best to tell Nick the truth at once.

"A minute more and you would have been done for yourself."

To Nick it had seemed that he had been engaged for hours with the lunatic. There is that which makes moments seem like days! In reality it had been so short a time that no one had thought anything about it until the directors came and had wished to see the cashier.

Nick went home in a carriage, and Chick and Patsy, his clever assistants, were there waiting for him.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUSPICIOUS FIRE.

There had been many rumors on Wall Street at the time of Banker Ashmead's death in regard to his financial condition. Many of these stories had crept out and up to the home of the widow and her daughter. It was not strange, then, that when a week later Nick Carter went to call upon Mrs. Ashmead that she should ask him about it. As yet, of course, no statement had been made to her by any one.

During the week that had passed Nick had made many discoveries. He had intrusted work to both Chick and Patsy, and they were all feeling that the chain was almost complete by which a wretch and murderer would be apprehended. Still there were some few matters that Nick wanted to satisfy himself about.

"Can you tell me of the probable amount of my husband's losses on that dreadful day?" Mrs. Ashmead asked.

"I cannot," said Nick; "it may reach an enormous sum, for the sudden slump in sugar and wheat may have involved nearly your entire fortune."

"What is this you tell me? Why, Mr. Carter, we have our home; this is worth a great deal."

"Yes, but of course you know it is mortgaged."

"Mortgaged!" she cried. "It cannot be. I never consented to anything of the kind."

"Nevertheless, madam, the mortgage is duly recorded in the registrar's office."

"It is a fraud! It must be," Mrs. Ashmead cried.

Nick looked at her keenly.

"My husband would never have consented to such an outrage. But his life insurance is safe."

"I regret the necessity of telling you that it, too, is assigned to the banking house of Mixer, Snell & Co."

Mrs. Ashmead regarded Nick with a thoughtful look.

"Then," she said, with a great effort to be calm, "we are lost! We have nothing! We are beggars!"

Nick had a curious feeling in regard to this woman. There was not one thing in her manner that he could seize upon as being suspicious, and yet, somehow, he did not trust her fully.

"I want to ask you a few questions," he said, "in regard to these sad affairs."

"I will gladly tell you anything I can to help you."

"Do you know James Mixer, the Wall Street banker?"

"I know of him," said Mrs. Ashmead, hesitating.

"But are you slightly acquainted with him?"

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Carter, I did know Mr. Mixer well when I was a young girl. In fact, I was once engaged to him."

"What was the relation existing between your husband and Mixer?"

"I do not know."

"When did you last see Mr. Mixer?"

"I happened to see him down street about one week ago."

"The day your husband was murdered?"

Mrs. Ashmead became deathly pale and spoke so low that Nick could hardly hear her.

"Yes." Then, louder, she said: "But you do not suspect him in any way with my husband's death?"

"I cannot tell you the chain of circumstances that I am weaving, Mrs. Ashmead. Every side of an event like this has to be investigated before it is safe to tell any one the conclusions that have been formed."

"I cannot think him guilty of anything wicked and wrong," she said, as she scanned the perfectly motionless face of the detective. As he did not speak, she said:

"If you do think Mr. Mixer had anything to do with this crime, why do you not arrest him at once?"

"I will see that everything that is necessary is done, Mrs. Ashmead, but will endeavor not to bring any one into it unless justice demands it.

"I will call again in a day or two. I hope by that time to have some news to communicate to you."

Nick was just passing into the hall when some one pulled the bell violently. A servant stepped before him to open the door. Nick heard a voice he knew, and quickly stepped to one side, the door swung open and McWilliams came in, whom Nick and Mrs. Ashmead were startling. He did not see Nick at first.

"I have come with a message of the utmost importance," began McWilliams, but before he could say another word Mrs. Ashmead had given him a warning look. Nick saw this perfectly.

McWilliams turned and saw Nick.

"I did not know you had company."

"That is all right, Mr. McWilliams. This is Mr. Carter, a great friend of my husband. He is helping me in settling my affairs. Mr. McWilliams," she said, turning to Nick, "is doing the same. He is acting, you know, in poor Mr. Peters' place."

Nick bowed.

"I have met this gentleman," said he. "He knows my relations with the two murders."

McWilliams started so that Nick saw it.

"Murders!" he said. "What do you mean? You speak as if you thought Mr. Peters was murdered, too."

"Was he not?" asked Nick, quickly.

"You ought to know, I will allow; you were alone in the vault with him."

For cool insolence Nick thought this quite remarkable. He looked at the man with a clear, honest, searching look which brought the blood into his cheeks.

"I will bid you good-morning."

Nick bowed to Mrs. Ashmead and turned to go, but McWilliams thrust himself before him.

"I don't know why you keep hinting to me that I know anything about this murder. I demand an explanation."

This was pure bluff and bluster, and Nick knew it.

"When the proper time and place comes I will tell you what you wish to know."

"I will have the explanation now."

"Oh, no, not now," said Nick, smiling.

"Mr. Carter!"

Nick turned at the sound of his name, spoken in a strangely muffled tone. Maud Ashmead, the daughter of the dead banker, had come silently to the room. Her eyes were distended, her face was pale. She did not look like the girl he had seen a week ago, on the day her father was murdered.

"I want to ask a great favor of you," she said, ad-

dancing toward Nick. "I want to ask you not to go any farther in this investigation."

"Miss Ashmead," said Nick, "I am surprised at this."

"It is for your own sake. You are doomed to die if you go on any further!"

"I take all the chances always," said Nick. "Justice would surely be done if all men were cowards."

"You must promise——" the girl began, but her voice faltered, and her eyes seemed fixed upon some forbidden object.

Nick turned and beheld McWilliams with his eyes full of a strange, mysterious light turned full upon her.

"Here is our hypnotist," said Nick to himself, "but he is not alone, by any means."

Nick left them without further words. He knew enough to be sure that Mrs. Ashmead had not been perfectly frank with him, but there were other more important things just then to be attended to.

At midnight Nick and Chick were coming toward town. Their business had taken them into the neighborhood of the Ashmead home. They left the car not far away to walk past the house.

When within a few blocks of the house they heard cries of "Fire!" saw a crowd gathering and realized in an instant that the home of the dead banker was doomed to destruction. Nick and Chick were both carefully disguised. No one would have known them.

"I expected just this," said Chick.

"Yes," replied Nick, "but not so soon."

"It did seem as if they would have had more sense."

The crowd was increasing. The police had hard work to keep the surging mass of humanity back.

The flames had gained such headway that no power on earth could stop them. Nick had on his fire badge. He and Chick had felt that sooner or later in the game the murderers of John Ashmead were playing that a fire was bound to occur. There was an enormous insurance upon the house and its contents.

In the midst of the excitement and wild clamor, Nick saw, as he drew near the house, the form of Maud Ashmead in the library.

Without waiting a second to call the attention of the fireman to it, he dashed up the steps, and amid blinding smoke he fought his way into the room where the girl was. She had dropped upon the floor completely overcome by the smoke. Beside her, in the lurid light, Nick saw two small packages which she had evidently taken out from a little closet behind a small panel in the wall. This was open, as he saw at a glance. He hastily swept his hand across the bottom to see that nothing remained. Then he gathered up the unconscious girl in his arms and rushed out of the building. He had put the packets in his pockets.

"I can inspect these later on," thought Nick. "I must get this girl to a place of safety."

As Nick ran down the steps with the pale and unconscious girl in his arms a cry went up from the crowd, for it had been rumored that a man had lost his life in trying to rescue Maud Ashmead. Several people who knew her had seen her rush into the house.

Nick had not been a moment too soon. The library that they had just left was a seething mass of flames in an instant.

The girl was taken in charge by friends and a physician summoned. She was soon restored to consciousness and taken to the home of a friend.

As Nick gained the street once more, Chick, who had waited in almost breathless suspense, said:

"It all goes to prove what we thought. Did you get the papers?"

"I expect I did. She never would have gone back for anything of less value. But, Chick, I do not believe that girl knows what she went for, in reality. I believe that she is under the entire control of that fiend."

"Were they in that panel in the library?" asked Chick.

"Yes, just where you said you thought they were, Chick. You are a good observer."

"Is it true that not a dollar of the Ashmead estate is left?" asked Chick.

"It is. This insurance is badly needed."

Chick, then, had to leave to attend to a matter which Nick had intrusted to him. But Nick determined to stay on the grounds until the excitement had died

down, and hear the comments of the men who had fought the fire. He might be able to glean a few facts that would be of use to him.

Scarcely had Chick left him when a man came hurriedly up to him and in an excited tone asked:

"Is not this the Ashmead home?"

"It was," said Nick, turning to look at the man. It was McWilliams. His face wore an expression of alarm and of horror.

"This is a surprise to you, all right," thought Nick. "You were not in this part of the game."

"Did the occupants escape?"

"I saw one lady brought out insensible," said Nick.

"Which one, young or old?"

The man's voice trembled.

"Do you know them?" asked Nick.

"Yes. Tell me if you know!"

"Well, if you know them, perhaps you can tell which one it was by what she said. She said when she could speak that she returned to the library for some important papers."

"Did she get them?"

"Why," said Nick, slowly, "the man who brought her from the burning building said that she took them from a little panel in the wall."

"But who got the papers?"

"She lay on the floor unconscious, and the papers were beside her. I think the man had the papers."

James McWilliams' face was like marble. There did not seem to be a drop of blood in it.

"Who are you?" asked Nick; "a friend of the family?"

"I am engaged in helping to settle the estate."

"Oh, a lawyer, I see," said Nick. "Well, I do not think you need to have any uneasiness about the papers. It is my impression that the man who rescued her and took the papers was a detective."

"My God!" broke from the man. Realizing that he had spoken so strongly he turned and hurried away and was lost in the crowd.

"Now," said Nick Carter to himself, "I am as sure as I wish to be that what I surmised is the truth. Those papers were the insurance policies that he brought to the house. This is a highly mixed up mess. When I get hold of the owner of the crystals I shall have the head and front of the whole affair."

Nick caught sight of McWilliams just at that moment. He was coming up to an officer to ask something. It was the very man who had helped Nick when he came out of the burning house with the girl.

"I'm afraid that he will find out some things from him which I do not wish him to know," thought Nick. "I must prevent that."

Nick went behind a little group of men who were talking excitedly about the affair. They were so busily engaged that they did not notice him, and when he came forward a minute later, with white hat instead of black, and a silken white beard, they would not have dreamed for an instant that he was the man who had passed them. Nick adjusted a pair of spectacles as he went toward McWilliams. Nick heard enough to make it certain that the policeman had described the rescuer of Miss Ashmead, so that McWilliams must know that he had given himself away to the dreaded detective.

Nick, in his attire as an old man, came quickly up to the policeman:

"I want to ask a question or two."

"No time to talk," said the man, gruffly.

"In behalf of the insurance companies," said Nick, "I want to know if you know anything about the origin of this fire."

At the mention of insurance, Nick saw McWilliams start excitedly.

"I'll tell you all I know later on."

"Where?" asked Nick.

"At the precinct station."

"Whom shall I ask for?"

"Townsend."

"I'll tell you," said Nick, "that the man who placed the policies in my keeping told me to come to you, for he felt sure that there was something crooked about it."

"Who gave them to you?" asked the policeman.

"Why, Carter—Nick Carter."

"Oh," said the policeman, politely, "yes, I know

him. Here is a man you ought to see." He turned, as did Nick, toward the spot where McWilliams had stood a moment before, but he was gone!

CHAPTER V.

NEAT TRICK.

Nick was busy in his mind as he stood looking casually around upon the crowd that lingered to watch the fire. He would soon, he told himself, be able to run the head of this series of crimes down. To murder had been added robbery, forgery, as he believed, and now arson! Surely a monster had planned all this.

"He shall be speedily run down. I will catch him red-handed!"

Looking straight before him, as he thought this, Nick saw a missile making straight for him. He dodged so quickly that two men near him were knocked down. The object struck a post near by, against which Nick had been standing.

As Nick detected the odor which rose at that moment he realized with horror what had been done. Some one had aimed a bottle of oil of vitriol directly at his face. Bits of glass and drops of the burning poison struck various persons in the crowd. A clamor rose and a rush was made for the criminal, but it was impossible to locate him.

Nick made his way to the edge of the crowd and saw, among the two or three carriages which had stopped there one in which, as the light fell upon it, was seated James McWilliams. Nick could not see his companion's face. It was scrupulously turned away from the light. But as Nick gazed at it he exclaimed:

"If I did not know that John Ashmead was dead I should say that that was Ashmead himself."

The carriage started slowly away, and Nick followed it some little distance. He gradually drew nearer as the carriage went so slowly. Nick was scarcely a dozen steps from it when he felt again that dreadful numbness that had overcome him before. The thought darted through his mind that it was that awful hypnotic spell. He put his hands behind him to try to overcome it, but he did not seem able to get them together. It seemed as if all he felt were clods or pieces of ice resembling human bonds. Nick fell to the ground. He was at last at the mercy of his pursuers.

When he had tried to clasp his hands behind his back he had not seized his own hands, and thus shut off the mysterious current from a foreign body, but his hands had been taken by another, who stood so close behind him that no one could observe the operation.

In an instant Nick was lifted into a carriage which stood near.

"All ready, drive on," was the order given to the driver.

A policeman who had seen the man fall came running up after the carriage had gone a short distance. He commanded the driver to stop.

"Don't detain us," said the man inside; "we are in a tremendous hurry."

"Who are you?"

"Come here," said the man, in a low tone.

The policeman came up close, and the man, putting his head out, whispered something in the policeman's ear.

"By the land!" said that official, then, as if even yet doubting what he had been told, he said:

"Let me see your badge."

"Sure, but be quick."

The man had evidently shown something which satisfied the policeman, for he drew back and the carriage rolled away. Not until well away from the crowd did the driver have orders to go fast. Then he was made to hurry with all possible speed. Toward the police station the carriage had gone at first, but when well out of observation by any one who might be curious, it turned into a dimly lighted narrow street. It was silent at that hour. Not a person was in sight, but drawn up by the curb was a dilapidated-looking old hack with a poor, tired-out horse attached to it. The driver was evidently sound asleep.

Nick's captor looked up and down the street.

"Here's a fine chance to avoid an possible tracking. This will throw anybody off the scent. Hold up," he said to his driver. "I want to see this cabby."

It took but a moment to wake the hackman and ask if he wanted a passenger. While the men were talking Nick had strangely come to himself. He had taken the situation in in an instant. He had not, of course, been able to tell of a thing that had gone on while he was under the spell. He had not known when McWilliams had left the hack, or who his captor was. But he made up his mind, which seemed strangely alert, that he would do a neat trick yet. Suiting the action to the word, he sprang up from the floor of the carriage. It was at some little distance from the men, and the backs of the two men were toward Nick. With a quick spring Nick caught the driver by the throat, and before he could make the faintest sound he had him in the carriage. Nick had that day received a tiny bottle of an old East Indian drug which would instantly make a person appear asleep or unconscious. He applied it to the driver's nostrils and he never made a sound. Nick then sprang up on the seat. This had taken scarcely any time. Nick had had the drug in his hand ready to apply as he jumped out of the carriage. He had barely seated himself with the lines in his hand, when the men came toward the carriage.

"I want him taken over the river, to Mag McCrea's place. Do you know where that is?"

"I'm afraid I don't, but you can tell me just how to go, can't you?"

"I don't think I can, so as to be sure you will get there all right—I don't want any delay—I'll go with you."

"All right."

"What's your price?"

"Five dollars for the two of you."

"Well, I'll give you five now, and then, my man, at the end of the trip, if you can satisfy me that you can keep your mouth tightly closed, you shall have another five."

The two men then went to the carriage and removed the unconscious body of the unconscious man. It took but a moment for which Nick was thankful. Then the stranger, whom Nick now well pulled down that cloth and cut on his face, for whose make-up subsequent John Adams, came up to Nick.

"I am through with you for this time. Here's ten for your trouble."

A grim smile appeared upon Nick's face.

"Well done, Nick," he said, "you must be on your travels."

Nick saw with pleasure after he had gone a little ways the familiar form of a policeman. From him he found out where the stable was from which the carriage had been taken. He went there with all speed.

As he reached it an attendant came forward.

"I told you," he said, "to be back here in two hours. You've been gone more than that by a good deal."

"Never mind," said Nick. "I want you to drive me to the bridge right lively."

"I guess not," said the man, insolently.

"See here," said Nick, "you get on your things and start."

A thought struck the man.

"You are an officer?"

"Well," said Nick, if that is so, come on, lively."

"Who're you after?"

"The man who hired this hack."

Nick jumped up and took the lines in his hands. The hostler got up beside him, grumbling every minute.

The horse made good time, and Nick felt that he would reach the bridge before his game got there, if nothing happened.

"You are after the wrong man, if you think Jed Burns, who hired this hack, would do any man foul, for he wouldn't."

"Then you know him?"

"I should smile!"

"Who is he?"

"Jed Burns."

"So you said, but I'd like to know how much you know about him and how much you got for saying what you have!"

"You are a detective!" cried the man. "I knew it! And you are after Jed, just as he said you would be!" Then, lifting himself up, the man yelled:

"Take that!"

Nick Carter received a blow with a slingshot which felled him to the ground. He fell headlong from the carriage.

"It was all right," muttered the man, as he bent over him. "It was what I was paid to do, but I don't like it. If it wasn't for the money that is in it, and I've gone too far to back out—I wouldn't go any further."

He gathered the helplesss form of Nick up in his arms and deposited it carefully in the carriage. Then he drove rapidly toward the bridge.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAGIC CRYSTAL.

The bridge police were always alert at this time of night. It was very dark, and the rain began to come down in great sheets that made it almost impossible to see anything.

As one of the policemen, Pat Nicholls by name, was pacing slowly past the western tower he saw a carriage coming along. He always took an interest in carriages at that hour. Another carriage had passed just a short time before. He hadn't liked the appearance of that, some way. This one he would watch.

As the patrolman hurried after the carriage he saw, to his horror, that it stopped and the body of a man had been taken out and had been flung out over the black water. He fired his pistol twice. He ran like a deer, but he was too late.

The villain gained the carriage and ran the horses for dear life.

"The divil take the varmint!" shouted the patrolman. His shot had called the attention of other police, and one came running toward him. As they stood peering over the rail, trying to discover the helpless man that had been dropped to his death, they heard a faint cry for help.

Nick Carter was said by those who feared and hated him to have more lives than a cat. It seemed to him sometimes himself that he had. To-night, as he was snatched out of the carriage and lifted up, the cold, damp air and the rain on his face revived him. He saw himself for an instant hanging over the rail. But the fortune that made Nick's evildoers superstitious about him favored him. He caught upon a projection and sustained by one arm and by his heavy coat was able to hold on for a moment.

He called faintly for help. His coat being drawn almost over his head, muffled his voice. Nicholls saw that he had not an instant to lose if he rescued this man from immediate death. He was not a very strong man, but he husbanded every particle of strength. The second officer was now by his side, and the two men, by their united strength, were able to draw Nick up over the rail. At this moment, by one of the strange coincidences of his career, Chick and Patsy came over the bridge from Brooklyn. They were astounded, as they came along, to see Nick the center of attraction in this strange group. They sprang out.

"I'm all right, boys," said Nick: "to be sure, my head feels as it frequently has before, like a pumpkin, but that is nothing new."

Nick treated the policemen and promised to remember them later.

He then went back to New York with Chick and Patsy. A private signal from Chick determined him to do this, instead of going on, in the hope of catching that other carriage and its wily occupants. Chick and Patsy declared that they had not met it on their way over, and as they both wanted to communicate something which they knew would affect their future work, Nick went back.

Chick and Patsy had been shadowing a certain house in Brooklyn. They had found that a mysterious veiled woman had been in and out several times. At least they believed it to be a woman. She was so heavily veiled that, as Patsy said, she might be the bearded lady for all that they knew.

They had secured a good place from which to study this particular house, and had decided that it was the place for them to investigate, when suddenly, late that afternoon, household goods had been moved away from it, and it was dark as a pocket to-night.

They were surprised and disappointed.

"Now," said Chick, "one thing is certain, that is that we must be cautious."

Nick and Patsy both laughed, for it was Chick's habit to give this advice and then, when occasion came, he would dash ahead with no more thought of danger than if it did not exist.

Nick did not tell them what he proposed to do. But as Chick was talking he thought that he would have a look at that house. It struck him that it was not deserted, by any means, if it was the place which he had in mind. He had tracked too many things home to it. Everything that Chick and Patsy had told him made him believe that it was a ruse, this moving incident, to call attention from the house. He knew that if he told the boys that he proposed going there it would serve to unsettle them, and their work was all well mapped out.

Nick and his two assistants rested that night and started the next day upon some further investigations. Insurance men were to be seen, the bank directors had a meeting, and all in all it was a busy time. Nick found time, however, to plan out a new and successful disguise. He then took a carriage to Brooklyn. Nick shuddered as he came to the spot where he had been suspended the night before.

"If all goes well Chick will have that gentleman locked up by the time I get his master," he thought, as he rode along.

He left the carriage after a short ride in Brooklyn and went directly to the post of observation he had selected. The house was truly as dark as a pocket. But as Nick went past (it stood on a corner) he saw that there was once in a while a fitful gleam of light which cast the very slightest reflection on the shades of one of the rooms.

"Somebody is in there," said Nick: "there is a fire, and, whoever it is, does not want to see me. But I am going to call."

Nick went stealthily up the steps that led to the front door. He reasoned that the inmates or inmate would not be on the lookout for any one at that entrance, the house having so wholly the appearance in front of being uninhabited.

"This is safer?" said Nick. "I may laugh at Chick's caution, but I don't care for any more doses of the bridge myself. But I must go into that house. I have so far nothing which I can positively swear that this man has done. I must see the inside of that house before my course is perfectly clear. If I can find him in possession of a crystal like mine, that, in addition to the rest that I have found, will clinch the whole thing."

Thus Nick thought as he picked the lock, listening carefully all the time to detect the slightest move on the inside. There was no stir of any kind.

"It may be, after all," thought Nick, "that there isn't any one here."

Nick let himself in, and to his delight he saw that the hall had hangings to the doors. Some of them were directly over heavy doors. They made fine hiding places for a detective, who knew how to take up mighty little room, how to keep from breathing almost, and how to keep perfectly still.

Nick crept along from one of these hiding places to another till he came to the one which he was certain, from light which came from the keyhole, was the one that opened into the room. He bent over as soon as he dared and looked through. Yes, this was the room.

The house was not deserted. A man about sixty years old sat in the dim room, lighted only by firelight. Everything in the room was of black wood. The man's white hair and face shone out all the more distinctly on this account.

On a chair beside him rested a small cabinet. This was also of black wood. The cover of the cabinet was open and on a setting of black velvet lay a magnificent gem-like crystal.

As the light shone fitfully on it, it sparkled and glowed brilliantly.

"Beautiful! Beautiful!"

Nick heard the man murmur.

"This will serve me a double purpose. Ah, I hope so!"

A faint step sounded outside; the man sprang up as if frightened. The side door was unlocked and a woman came slowly in. The opening and shutting of that door gave Nick the chance he had longed for. He

skillfully opened the door against which he was standing, and holding it slightly ajar, he could look and hear perfectly, concealed as he was behind the long, full drapery.

"In God's name! You here!" the man fairly gasped.

"Yes, I did not dare trust the news to any one else. Nick Carter has the papers."

"How was this possible?"

His tone cut like steel.

"He rescued Maud from the burning house, and——"

"What has that to do with it? Tell me instantly."

The woman was deathly pale and could hardly speak for terror.

"I sent her for the papers, as James told me to do."

"He is a fool! He is not capable of coping with a fiend like Nick Carter!"

"He seemed to be until now."

"You may well say seemed! But you do not know what power it is that controls him when he seems to do well."

"What will you do?" she asked, in evident distress.

"I will have those papers. Everything is lost if they are lost. But you need not tremble like that. I will have those papers."

"How?"

"He is certain to seek me before long. That is coming. Even I can see that."

"What will you do when he comes?"

"You ought not need to be told. Woman, I will kill him myself, alone and unaided, but I will have them."

The woman shuddered. Her glance roved around the room. In one corner stood a grinning skeleton. This Nick could just dimly see. Then she looked down on the crystal.

"Speak!" she cried. "Where did you get this? It is the same!"

"No, not the same. It is better than either of the others. I got this yesterday."

"You are in danger," she cried. "If Carter should find you with that in your possession you will be lost."

"Dr. Ernesto lost!" The old man laughed. "No, no: not lost. It will be your Carter who will be lost. Do you know that if I had him here in this room with this magic crystal and my own powers at work that he would be the most pliant tool Ernesto ever had!"

"But he has friends, people who love him," said the woman, softly and sadly.

"Once let his eyes rest on that stone!" the man whispered, half to himself.

He got up from his chair, and waving his hands, he chanted something that sounded like an incantation.

"I am going now," the woman said. He did not appear to notice her.

Ernesto, as he had called himself, did not follow her out of the room. As she slipped quietly out into the hall and down the broad stairs that led to a sort of basement parlor, Nick crept after her.

Light enough came in from the electric light at the corner to show him that at one side of the room was what looked like a handsome wardrobe or folding bed. She walked straight toward this. Nick heard her open it.

"She is going to imitate me," thought Nick, "and change her wraps to mystify people."

He waited to hear her come back. But he heard nothing. He peered into the room still closer. Then he heard a loud and distinct snap. The wardrobe door was completely closed. But where was the woman? This was a new kind of trick.

Perhaps she had locked herself into the closet, or whatever it was.

Nick said to himself: "These people are about a match for me, but I am going to see what has become of that woman."

Nick went stealthily over to the case and put his ear to it.

"A panel!" he said. He opened it with a skeleton key, and sure enough it was empty! Nick tried, making as little noise as possible, to find some secret opening. But he was completely in the dark.

CHAPTER VII.

LIKE A RAT IN A TRAP.

As Nick stood inside the cabinet, he thought he heard footsteps. In a moment more he was sure of it.

"All right, let him come. But let him look for me."

Nick closed the door of the cabinet, then he took out his little lantern and looked about him. As he closed the door, to his astonishment he saw a panel large enough to admit a good sized body opening in the wall opposite the door. It seemed that the closing of that door started some mechanism which opened this. Nick stepped through. Once inside he closed the panel. A bolt shot through a beam, dropped down, and he was saved from what was behind him. But what was before him? Nick stood for some little time with dark lantern and revolver in his hands.

While he stood there expecting a call from Dr. Ernesto, he was not idle. He examined the ingenuity of the various devices he saw. This was not a recent affair. The woodwork bore the marks of age. It was a cramped position in which he was. He could scarcely stand up, and there were only about two feet of space to stand on. To the left of the panel there was a very narrow flight of stairs. Nick wondered where that flight would lead him. He had no wish to get caught in a trap. But it was certain that the mysterious woman had passed down there. It must have some fairly good way out connected with it, for she had gone alone and of her own free will.

"I guess," laughed Nick, "Chick would not call this foolhardy. I mean to see where this leads to."

Nick had no intention of being followed if he could help it. He studied a little time upon some device which would prevent this.

"I have it!" said Nick, with a long drawn breath of relief. Taking a powerful little steel jack from his pocket, he slipped it between the top of the lever which barred the panel and a bolt which protruded from the wall. He screwed this tightly to the place, which it seemed to fit, as if made for it. Then he turned and went slowly down the stairs.

Nick soon reached the bottom. But he could not see a sign anywhere of a place by which he could get out. He tapped the wall, he searched with his hands, going over the wall. He examined it by holding his lantern closely to it, but all to no avail!

Suddenly Nick thought of a story he had heard, and he turned his face toward the stairs, and by main strength he lifted up a top of one stair. At this another slid up and then a section of several stairs slid up. Then was revealed a second flight of stairs. The second flight opened into what had once been a wine cellar or vault.

"Where can that woman have gone?" Nick asked himself, as he looked about for some opening.

"I will know!" he said.

Nick then went back up the stairs, determined to find out if possible what the secret of the place was.

As Nick was about to step upon the lower stair he saw that he nearly hit his head against a pipe that protruded from the wall quite high up.

"What is that for, I wonder?" said Nick, just as he heard a strange rattling sound, and then there fell an immense iron shutter from the place of its concealment in the wall above. It shut Nick up as in a trap, and then, to his amazement and horror, there poured down upon him a deluge of water from the pipe.

"I laughed at Chick," he thought, "but I am trapped."

Then he wished he had told the boys of his plan to investigate the house.

"Still if I get out all right I am glad I did not tell them, for they have enough to do."

Nick was in a terrible situation and he realized it perfectly. Unless he could do something quickly to extricate himself he would drown like a rat in a tub.

It seemed that there must be somewhere an outlet for the water. But he could find nothing of the kind. The iron shutter was of such thickness that he could not make the least impression upon it. The water was already chilling his feet. Suddenly Nick thought: "I might plug that pipe—with what?" He had absolutely nothing that he could use. If the pipe had been lead he thought he might have bent it. But it was above his head, and even that was a doubtful thing. The water rose rapidly. But Nick's courage rose also.

"I am not going to give up yet!" he cried. His voice sounded strange and uncanny to him.

It seemed to Nick that he had thought of a thousand things that he could not do, but not one that he could.

"If Chick or Patsy only knew where I am!" Nick finally said, aloud. "What could they do if they did know?" he asked himself, then his active mind began to frame answers.

A sudden inspiration came: "If one of those boys was up there above me he would cut his way to me!" The water creeping higher and higher warned Nick that the time was short.

"I can do it myself," he cried to the bare stone walls. "There must be a trap," thought Nick. "I have my knife. With its saw blade I must cut a hole out!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM DANGER TO DANGER.

Nick opened his big knife, then, springing up, he tried to catch hold of the pipe. He failed the first time, then he caught it. He had fastened his still burning lantern to his arm, and while he held on with one hand to the pipe, with the other he made a vicious lunge upward into the wood. He rejoiced that he had noticed at first that the wood looked old and even rotten in places, little thinking how much that would mean to him later.

Nick rejoiced again when he did get a big splinter off. He was getting along so well that he felt his spirits rise, when he heard a sound that struck terror into his soul. It was the sound of footsteps overhead.

"I guess," thought Nick, "that my time is short."

The steps paused just over his head. Nick pressed the spring that shut off the light of his lantern. All was darkness in his tomb, as he called it. A moment later a ray of light pierced through, showing Nick that there certainly was a trapdoor. Some one was going to look and see how the victim was disposed of. Nick held his knife in his teeth and his revolver in the free hand, all ready. The water was now up to within a short distance of the floor above, and if Nick had been standing it would have covered his head before this.

The trapdoor was lifted little by little with the greatest caution, then, after the investigator had seen clearly the condition of the water, it was thrown back entirely.

The man above bent forward with a light and looked down. Nick could not see his face as yet. He could see his hand and wrist, but the head was kept well out of range, as if guarding against every ever-possible danger.

Nick did not lose his matchless courage. The odds seemed very much against him, but his coolness did not desert him for a moment. He was so cold that he shivered, and nothing but force of will kept his hand from trembling. But he kept his revolver level, ready to shoot, the instant he could get sight of his enemy.

"I think I've got you now, you fiend of a man!" Nick heard these words breathed over his head.

"Twice I've tried, but this time I have succeeded."

The man leaned forward so that his forehead and eyes were in plain sight of Nick.

There came a flash, a loud report, a wild cry of despair and of horror.

Then a body rolled headlong and dropped into the deadly cistern! Nick was obliged to let go of the pipe. He could not cling to it a moment longer, the body had jostled him in such a manner as it came down. But the water was so deep that Nick could keep himself afloat in it, and now he arose directly under the trap. He grasped the edge of the opening, and although the wood was rotten he kept his hold, and in a minute or less he had leaped up to the floor above.

"I wonder if I finished him! I wonder who he was!"

These thoughts flitted through Nick's mind, as he bent over the narrow opening to see if he could discover his late foe. The water was foaming as it continued to pour out of the pipe. Nick could distinguish nothing. Suddenly, even as he looked, the water stopped!

"I shall have company soon," Nick said. "Some one has shut that off."

There were two doors in the miserable, bare room in which Nick had found himself. One stood ajar, the other was closed. Nick tried the knob, but the door

was locked. He speedily opened it, and was about to enter when he made a revolting discovery. It was a well-appointed dissecting room into which he looked. There were slabs, tables, apparatus of all kinds, instruments that could be used in the cutting up of the human body.

Nick entered and closed the door. A sickening odor filled the air. Nick had not closed the door a moment too soon. He heard steps in the outer basement. Peering through the keyhole, he saw a man standing with a light in his hand. His attitude expressed surprise and alarm. The open trapdoor, the trail of water which Nick had left on the floor to the door of the dissecting room, all seemed to indicate the failure of some plan.

As the man turned to look about, Nick got a full view of his face.

"McWilliams!" said Nick. "The other was Dr. Ernesto!"

Nick saw McWilliams shudder. Worn out as Nick was by his dreadful experiences, he determined to nab this criminal and plotter. As he was about to carry this thought into execution he heard another sound. McWilliams heard it, too, as was evident from his manner. While both men stood listening, Nick's mind ran like lightning over this case. Perhaps the woman was about to appear on the scene again. Nick had now not a doubt; in fact, he knew that the veiled woman and the one he had followed, almost to his ruin, was the widow of John Ashmead. But what connection had she with these crimes?

In these few minutes, while Nick stood in his drenched clothes awaiting some new revelations, he had changed his line of reasoning. Maud Ashmead had been engaged to Peters, the dead cashier. He had been a tool by the schemers. Nick had found out that Ashmead had been twice married. To this wife he had been married only a short time. She had been in a plot with this Ernesto before her marriage. This seemed reasonable to Nick. Peters had been used to divert suspicion from the real criminals. Why, asked Nick, was Mr. Mixer inveigled into it? Assuming that Mrs. Ashmead and Ernesto were the instigators of the whole series of crimes, what had they expected to gain by causing every possible security except the insurance papers and some stolen securities to be assigned to Mixer? Suddenly the truth dawned upon Nick. It came like an inspiration—Mixer was to be the next victim!

"They could not mesmerize or hypnotize John Ashmead, and he had to go. But Mixer, being a spiritualist, they could work upon him! I see now what that man personated Ashmead for; a clever trick!" All this passed with the speed of lightning through Nick's mind.

As he waited almost breathlessly for what would happen next, Nick saw McWilliams take out a pistol as the steps drew nearer.

"Jolly!" said Nick, with a quick revulsion of feeling, almost smiling: "Maybe he thinks Nick Carter is after him! But I want to see who this newcomer is."

At the moment when the steps seemed to pause there came a blinding flash, a blinding report, and Nick Carter was thrown backward. As he felt himself going he saw what seemed a thousand lights like stars dancing in the air. He knew nothing more. He lay like a dead man on the floor of the dissecting room.

CHAPTER IX.

A DIABOLICAL MACHINE.

When Nick Carter was thrown backward and knocked senseless against the floor of the dissecting table his last thought was of Chick and Patsy.

The concussion, violent as it was, was caused by the foul gases which had poured into the tightly closed room when the water filled the cistern. Some illuminating gas was mixed with it from a small leak in a pipe near where Nick was standing. His lantern, which he had lighted after it had been submerged in the water, had lighted these gases, and he had gotten the full force of the explosion.

Nick lay silent on the floor. McWilliams' light had gone out, and he, although greatly excited and frightened, had sustained no real injury. As McWilliams peered into the room where Nick lay, he saw a form

lying there. He hoped with all his soul that it was Nick Carter. He had been on Nick's track most cunningly, and had seen him enter the house. But he thought in an instant that it might easily be Ernesto. Suddenly he heard a splashing sound. Somebody was in the water! Who was it? He lighted his lamp and went to look into the deathtrap. He saw a man's hand thrown up from the water, and he recognized in a moment that it was the doctor's hand. He reached down with lightning-like quickness and grasped that almost lifeless hand. It was a tug to get him out, but McWilliams accomplished it after a few hard struggles. He worked over the man for some time, and was rewarded by soon seeing some signs of life.

Then he went over and looked down on the white face of Nick Carter.

"I could end your days this moment," for he saw at once that Nick was simply stunned; "but to Dr. Ernesto shall be delegated that job. No one will ever be able to connect me with that."

McWilliams had spoken aloud, thinking that both men were unable to give heed to him. It had been scarcely more than a whisper, but the doctor had heard every word. He saw in a moment as if a flood of light had been poured over the past, that this man had cunningly meant to act in such a way in all their dealings that no blame should attach to him. He had succeeded in deceiving everybody. The doctor lay upon the floor too weak as yet to be helped up, when a woman came gliding into the room. She knelt beside him.

"Are you much hurt?"

"Yes, that fiend of a Carter has nearly been the death of me."

"Is he dead?" she asked, with horrible eagerness.

"I don't know."

"Well, you know what you can do, and what must be done!"

"What?"

"You must fulfill your pledge and then this house must go as the other did."

"Be quiet," he whispered; "McWilliams doesn't know about that."

The woman, like an evil spirit, shook her white hand, and said:

"If you do not do this you shall go yourself upon the dissecting table."

"Whose hand would prepare it for me?"

"Mine. I tell you it has got to be done! To go so far and fail now, it would mean destruction to me as well as you. And Henry Mixer must die!"

"You said that you would attend to that part of the thing."

"So I will. He is coming to this house to-night, expecting to hear from the spirits. He will bring the papers. I will put him into a trance, then your work will be easy."

The woman arose and stood like an avenging fiend.

"Bestir yourself," she said. "Put that awful detective on your table and have it clear for Henry Mixer!"

After she had gone from the room a moment or two, McWilliams entered.

The doctor arose painfully. Wicked and blood-stained as he was, Ernesto's hot Spanish blood had rebelled against the ruling of this woman. Hers had been the master mind that had directed and suggested the devilish ingenuity of many of their acts. He had begun to suspect that after she had all the money she wished for that he himself would be one of her victims. But this should never be, he told himself.

"Is he dead?" Ernesto asked, as McWilliams came into the room.

"Not so near as you are now. You had a close call from that shot of his."

"He is a dangerous enemy. He is the deadly enemy of both of us."

"Yes," said McWilliams, "he must die."

"Then kill him."

"I can."

"So you said when you turned on the water."

"And so I would if you had not turned it off."

"I thought it full."

"Yes," sneered McWilliams, "until you went in to see for yourself."

"What is the matter now? How is it that he is so near death?"

"He tried to blow up the place."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know how. He always could do anything he wanted to."

Ernesto suddenly made up his mind Nick Carter should die. He would not wait even to change his dripping clothes. This detective should have as horrible a death as could be meted out to him. Both men heard a gurgling sound. Both started.

"The trap has been opened! The water has been let out into the sewer."

"Who has done this?" asked McWilliams.

"Satan," whispered the doctor. McWilliams grew pale and said no more. Nick moved slightly. They heard him.

"Get a rope!" cried McWilliams.

The doctor hastened to obey, and it was time that they made a move, for Nick's marvelous strength was returning. In no time at all the men had bound him. And when he recovered full consciousness, a heavy bandage was placed over his eyes. He could not at first recall where he was, but soon it flashed upon him that he was in the dissecting room. He heard their voices plainly.

"I've got a machine that was used in the Spanish inquisition. It will kill, but it is a horrible death!"

"What is it?" asked McWilliams.

"I'll show you. Handfuls of men as strong as that infernal Carter went stark, staring mad!"

Nick heard the two men cross the floor, as if in search of something. Nick realized that he was at their mercy. This was a danger such as in his hazardous life he had never encountered. He gently, and with all the firmness of his powerful muscles, tried the cords. He could not make the least yielding pressure upon them. Nick's chances had never looked so few and so poor. He heard the rattle of blocks and what sounded like steel plates.

Although he could see nothing, he felt that they were making ready for him. They seemed to have trouble in fitting the machine together. There appeared to be bolts and screws. Occasionally Nick heard a fiendish laugh which made him think that without doubt the man called Ernesto had lost his reason. It was like the laugh of a maniac. Hopeless as he felt it to be, Nick worked away at the cords that bound him. Sometimes they cut into his flesh. He was almost glad they did. It distracted his mind for a moment from their awful operations.

"It is ready now!" said Ernesto. "We'll lift him on the table first."

Nick felt himself grasped by both men, and as they lifted him the cords slackened a little. He wildly tore his right hand free and snatched the bandage from his eyes. He still had his little spring revolver in his sleeve, and without trying to look at the objects about him he managed to press the spring.

It went off with a loud report. But, to his dismay, it hit neither of the men. They sprang upon him then, and McWilliams let his whole weight down on Nick's right arm. But Nick was no longer a dangerous foe. That was the last poor spark of resistance!

Ernesto wrenched the pistol from Nick, and, exhausted and overpowered, the detective sank back on the table. But Nick Carter's dauntless courage had not abandoned him. He would watch with all his power to discover some weak point in their attack.

The direful spirit of revenge had full possession of the two men. A heavy strap was passed about Nick's waist. His legs were drawn down and securely fastened. He lay on the middle of the slab. When they put the strap over his left wrist Nick had expanded the muscles all he could, hoping that he might in some way get it loose, but the doctor did not leave much leeway. He never looked at Nick after one sudden glance into those clear eyes. Nick had not spoken one word, but only gazed into the doctor's eyes with that searching look which had caused many a guilty man to cower down and confess to his misdeeds.

Nick watched the queer contrivance above his body. It consisted of cords and pulleys and wheels. A heavy weight was attached to it and hung at one side. It made him think of a clock, although it was not at all like one. In the center directly over his heart was a murderous-looking knife. This knife swung about in a sort of a revolution. He could not see just how it did go.

Nick shuddered. Nothing could save him now. He could not tell how long he had been unconscious. If his watch was still in his pocket it was not going. It had doubtless been stopped by the water. So he could only guess at the time. If it had been long, he would expect Chick and Patsy to be on the lookout for him. They had all decided on some plan of work. He was to meet them and then they were to determine on the arrests. The new developments making the widow of the banker a party to all the evils that had been done had caused a change of plan. As Nick lay watching, that murderous knife ever coming nearer and nearer, his only comfort and hope lay in the fact that many a time Chick and he had come to the same conclusion from the same line of facts which they had gleaned.

"He will look for me in this murderer's den! He will see as I did that it is still occupied!"

Still the knife descended. Slowly, slowly. Sometimes Nick almost wished it would come faster and end it all. Then his brave heart would revive, and he would pray that the time might be long. Ceaselessly the knife came down. It was so near Nick's face that he almost felt its sharp point! His senses almost forsook him. He was worn out with all the dreadful experiences of these last days. He did not wonder that men had become insane, compelled to gaze at this slowly descending knife!

Suddenly there was a jarring sensation. Nick felt the tip of the knife upon his chest. It seemed to be tearing his clothing. He tried to slide his body to one side, but could not. Again he heard that queer, jarring sound and sort of tremor that went over the infernal machine.

The room was dark now. Nick could not hear the men. In fact, he had not heard a sound since they had strapped him, set the machinery going and left him alone to his fate.

Suddenly Nick felt something scamper over his feet. He thought it some part of the machinery of death. He was too stupified by all he had suffered to realize that the awful knife had stopped. Then he felt something touch his hand. The next thing he realized was that something was tearing at the leather strap around his wrist. It was soaked with blood, where the cords had cut in as he had tried to release himself.

"Great heavens! It's rats!" said Nick to himself.

A gleam of hope mixed with something like horror filled the mind of Nick. If they will only content themselves with gnawing the leather! As Nick spoke to himself he tried to hold still and not to frighten the rat away. He hoped he might loosen that one hand. And as fate and fortune had ever been kind to him in the strangest ways in the world, it came about that his latest enemy proved to be a friend. With a feeling of joy that was greater than he had ever known, Nick Carter had one hand free once more! With one hand free Nick felt like a giant. Nick Carter was himself again. He had lost his knife in the cistern, and had nothing that could cut the other strong straps.

"Have I nothing?" he asked himself, in a frenzy of disappointment. Then he remembered that in an inside pocket he had a little file that he could get at. It would take long to cut anything, but to be doing something was a blessing. He did not give one moment's thought to the stopping of the knife. He could investigate that afterward.

Nick had, after what seemed to him an age, his other hand free. Then, with all his strength, he went to work to liberate his legs. Still all was silent in the great, gloomy, mysterious house. Suddenly there came to Nick Carter the sweetest sound he ever heard. It was the sound of five soft but clear taps on the water pipe, for there were sinks and faucets in this room. This was Chick's signal! It meant life and all that is sweet in the world! Nick had by this time gotten one leg free. He went to work on the other with confidence. He did not fear that he would be disturbed, for terrible as these men were, he did not look for their return until they were sure he were dead. Dead, yes, and, horrible thought! until the rats had had their feast!

CHAPTER X.

A SENSATIONAL ENDING.

Chick and Patsy had not been idle. It was largely through their work that Nick had been able to verify many of his best clews in this strange and sensational case.

When Nick did not return to his office to meet them, as had been agreed upon, they were both uneasy. One crime had followed another so rapidly that they knew that the plotters would stop at nothing. "Let's go," said Chick, "but first we must eat a good meal, so that if necessary we need not let up in our looking for Nick for a week. Nick is in Brooklyn somewhere, I am sure, since we found out that place from that fool hack driver. But where? That is the question."

Within half an hour the two young men set out for Brooklyn. They had completed a plan of search by the time they reached there. After two hours they met and compared notes. They had decided to represent themselves as city employees. Each took a side of the street, and going into each house, they inspected the water pipes. They had agreed upon a lot of signals.

"Remember," said Chick, "that all the water and gas pipes are connected with the mains, but the gas pipes pass through the meters in every case. So, after trying first the water pipes with the signal we must try the gas pipes inside the meters."

"I'm on to the whole thing!" laughed Patsy. "If we should get into a tight place we can let each other know right off."

They had gone over a good deal of ground when they met on the corner above the house for which they had now decided must yield something at least in the way of a clew to the whereabouts of Nick.

It was dark, and they knew that they must hasten, or no one would believe that they were working for the city.

"I am going into that house by hook or by crook," said Chick. "If I don't come out soon you may know that there is something doing."

"I shall come, too. Maybe they will think you are a plumber and I'm your helper."

"But you have on too good clothes."

"Well, I like that," said Patsy, grinning. "I'm going with you."

They went to the dark front door as answering their purpose better than any other. It was some time before there was any response.

"What do you want?" asked some one, in a voice which Chick thought sounded like that of McWilliams.

"I wish to examine the supply pipe where it enters this house. I am in the city department and am making an inspection."

"Well, you will have to come again. There is nothing the matter here. It is too late, even if there were something the matter."

"Yes, it is late, I know. I am very sorry to trouble you, but really it will take but a moment, and then I can make my report, which must be made to-morrow."

"I can't help that."

"Please don't detain me. I might just glance at it. It won't take but a minute!"

"You can't come in."

"Of course, you know," said Chick, "that your water supply will be shut off."

"Shut it off, then, and there will be such a howl down at the city hall that you'll wish you hadn't."

Chick stepped up to get a look at the speaker, who had kept himself carefully out of sight. To Chick's surprise, he was not visible. The door had been opened by some mechanical contrivance from above, and thus the man had not come down at all. This was a pleasant surprise to Chick.

"All right, I'll not stop," said Chick. Making a signal to Patsy to follow him, he slid into the house. They hid behind the heavy draperies, which had served Nick so well, and the door slowly closed with a loud enough noise so that the man above was aware that it was shut. Chick had not a single doubt in his mind that Nick was in this house. Patsy must be left to his own devices, but Chick must investigate. He slipped along the wall to the next door, after telling Patsy to keep concealed as long as possible, and, if not, to come boldly out and say that he had stepped inside and had been shut in, and some one would undoubtedly gladly let him out. As Chick gained the door and pulled the drapery about him he saw that the door was ajar. He gently pushed it a little wider open. He looked then into the very room through which Nick had disappeared. Chick saw all the furnishing, and to his delight he saw several objects that had belonged to the Ashmead family.

"Oh!" breathed Chick, "I am on the right track. These people found that Nick was too hot on the trail, and they have operated from this house. Nick is here. I wonder how he came here? If he was lured here in some way or if—— Yes, I believe that is it. He came to investigate."

Chick went stealthily into the room. All was still. He looked about as Nick had done before him. He heard a sound, and then, as he stepped behind a drapery that hung at the side of the wardrobe or cabinet, Chick heard the panel or door open. He peered out through the tiniest little place, and his heart gave a great thump against his side. There issued from this cabinet a form mysteriously clothed. It looked like a dead man in strange, loose garments.

It was the face of the dead banker! Chick was not a coward, but this beat all his experiences. He actually thought of retreating and trying to get out of the house. But only for a moment. He remembered that Nick had once told him that he knew that Henry Mayer

was a spiritualist, and that he often went over to Brooklyn.

"This gang," Nick had said, "are all either spiritualists or hypnotists."

This memory was a blessing to Chick, for now he would know what to expect. He only hoped that the ghost wouldn't get after Patsy. He smiled as he thought Patsy would be enough for it. This wardrobe-like thing was then a regular spiritualists' cabinet. Chick got into it, as the ghost had not closed it. "He'll be back," Chick thought, "but I will get the next use of it."

Chick found the panel as Nick had, and as he went out, as Nick had done, he made a discovery. There was another panel or very small door. Through a chink in it Chick saw a faint light. "This way the ghost goes!"

He pushed it slowly aside, and there was another narrow stairway.

He went boldly down a few steps, and as he saw a water pipe at one side he gave the taps which thrilled Nick's heart with hope.

Through another way Chick passed into a little hall. Opening the first door he came to, he turned his light full on, and there, in the midst of the most horrible surroundings, he found Nick Carter.

Like the ghost of himself, Nick looked.

But as he saw Chick, the blood which had been chilled by his long, cold vigil seemed to course once more with new life through his veins. He did not speak. Neither did Chick. They stood and looked at each other.

Then Nick held up one finger in admonition. Chick came over noiselessly to him.

In a few words Nick told him that they must strike to-night. When he knew that Patsy was in the house he felt sure that they would be successful.

Back of the dissecting room there was a narrow closet-like space, with a large window. Chick went silently into this. He removed the fastening from the window and saw that if necessary that they could leave this house by that means. He beckoned to Nick to come in there. Nick felt all the strength that courage of the highest quality could give him, but he stood in need of food. As soon as he reached the little room, Chick took out from his pocket the most inviting meal Nick Carter ever saw. It was only a couple of chicken sandwiches, but never did morsel taste better to man.

"Now, Chick, let them come on," he laughed.

Presently, as they listened, trying to place the inmates of the house, they heard voices.

"Dr. Ernesto, you have played shrewdly, but you have much to fear."

The speaker was the widow of the murdered banker, the devil-woman, as Chick always called her, who had plotted and planned all this dark crime.

"What have I to fear, now that that accursed detective is dead?"

"Do you know that he is dead?"

"Of course I know it."

"Have you seen his dead body? I will not believe it until you can say that you have seen him dead."

"He is dead, madam. The knife has done its work and the rats have done theirs."

"Well, then the clothing must be destroyed, and the bones."

"That will all be seen to. When does Mixer come?"

"McWilliams will go after him, or rather he has gone. They will be here soon now."

"Does he bring the bonds?"

"He does, doctor; he cannot help himself. With my powers of mesmerism and yours over those magic crystals, he is ours. Does the cabinet work all right?"

"Yes, perfectly. I tried it before you came back. I never saw it work better. You would think that your husband was here if you had seen the figure to-night. What will your stepdaughter do?"

"I do not know. I have not been able to do all I would like with her. She seems to have some power that repels my power."

"Shall we wait for Mixer?" asked Chick.

"I think it would be best. If not wholly mesmerized he might be of assistance. At any rate, I want to see all I can of this gang and their doings."

A slight tapping on the window of the room in which they were startled them both. Chick had turned out his lantern, and in the darkness he made out the welcome form of Patsy. But how had Patsy gotten out of this house? Very easily, to be sure. He had remained hidden as long as he could behind the drapery. He was afraid he would be caught if he stayed by that door. He had just started for another farther from the main entrance, when the ghostly figure of John Ashmead came gliding toward him.

Patsy rubbed his eyes.

"That fake don't wash with me," he said to himself;

"I ain't near so easy scared as all that. John Ashmead is as dead as a dead herring, an' some likkle is trying to play some dirty trick, working some blooming spirit gag. But not on Patsy! I ain't no sich a jay!"

Nevertheless, Patsy got out of the way, and as the door opened to admit Mixer and McWilliams, Patsy glided out before McWilliams had time to question him.

Patsy knew that Chick was in that house. Nick might be or not, but Chick certainly was. He went around to the side, climbed the little railing that shut off the back door, and when he saw that one large window he climbed up and gave the little rap that Chick had heard. They did not dare let Patsy in at first, but after the voices had died away, and it seemed certain that Ernesto and the woman had gone into another room, Chick opened the window just far enough for Patsy to slip in.

Once more they heard voices.

"Now we have everything settled, I think," said one.

"Yes."

"Then we will attend to that matter now."

There was a slight stir.

"Now for the speak of the dead banker," whispered Patsy.

The three detectives moving noiselessly toward the door and standing in a compact group, saw a strange sight.

Henry Mixer was half kneeling in the door before the cabinet which held the brilliantly glowing crystal. Above him towered the ghostlike figure of the dead banker. Mixer had drawn a bundle of papers from his pocket, and was handing them to the widow of the murdered man.

Nick's quick eye had seen on a table near the doctor a brace of beautiful revolvers. Motioning toward them, he asked Chick for his. Quick as a flash, Chick had given it to him, and also a knife and one or two other implements of warfare and of self-defense. Then, as the group stood silent as the figures in a play when the curtain is about to be rung down, Nick Carter strode forward.

"I will take those papers!"

A cold shriek burst from the lips of the woman.

"You shall die first!" cried the voice of McWilliams.

The lights, which had been rather dim, were all put out by some one, but Nick Carter made a sudden spring and took the "spirit" of the dead banker in his arms. While Patsy turned on the lights, Chick had clasped his arms around the form of McWilliams, but not in time to prevent him from firing off the pistol which he had drawn at the instant Nick had spoken. By the strange and awful irony of fate, the bullet struck the woman full in the face. She fell like a leaden weight upon the floor, dead.

This unexpected turn seemed to take the spirit of resistance out of the men. McWilliams, with a groan of agony, sank down on the floor near his victim. Patsy had produced the "bracelets," as he called them, and both men were secured.

When the doctor threw aside the mask which, with fiendish cunning, had been made to look like the dead man, his own face looked enough like that of a dead man to deceive any one.

Ernesto, struck with the marvelous luck of Nick Carter, told him that he ought to live for a hundred years. Henry Mixer was released from the mesmeric spell. He looked about him like one distraught.

Thus happily ended the most aggravating case Nick had ever had.

McWilliams was tried and condemned for the crime of killing the banker, but he died in prison.

Ernesto got a heavy sentence. The woman, who had been the leader in it all, who had instigated the idea of McWilliams working enough of the hypnotic spell upon the cashier Peters to cause him to open the safe, had gone to be tried in a higher court.

Maud Ashmead had her rightful inheritance restored to her. Henry Mixer lost all interest in spiritualism. He never forgot Nick Carter. And the three detectives were handsomely rewarded by the directors of the bank.

Many of the occult matters that figured in the case were never explained satisfactorily. Ernesto claimed to know nothing of any of them. So they did not figure very much in the court. There was enough to convict them of crime without that.

THE END.

The next issue, No. 366, will relate one of the most notable cases in which Nick Carter was ever engaged. It is one that he will never forget, both on account of the mystery involved and of the personal perils he was forced to undergo. No one who likes a thrilling story can afford to miss "Nick Carter in the Hidden Chamber; or, The Search for the Lost Millionaire."

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

CONTAINING

THE MOST UNIQUE AND FASCINATING TALES OF WESTERN ROMANCE

342—Diamond Dick's Summer Resort; or, High Old Times at the Sea Shore.
343—Diamond Dick's "Give-and-Take"; or, Caught in the Undertow.
344—Diamond Dick's "White Ghost"; or, Run Down by Auto.
345—Diamond Dick at the Circus; or, An Old Friend in a New Game.
346—Diamond Dick at Coney Island; or, A Warm Proposition Played to a Finish.
347—Diamond Dick's Skiplap Pard; or, The Cheerful Waif's Big Winning.
348—Diamond Dick's Stand-Off; or, The Shotgun Messenger's Last Trip.
349—Diamond Dick at Fort Piegan; or, Calling an Army Bluff.
350—Diamond Dick's Makeshift; or, The New Boss at Hold-Over.
351—Diamond Dick's Golden Spike; or, Bucking the Track Layers.
352—Diamond Dick's Schedule; or, The First Train to Dangerfield.
353—Diamond Dick's Wild West; or, A Fair Field and No Favor.
354—Diamond Dick's Double-Bill; or, A Hot Turn Between Acts.
355—Diamond Dick's Farewell Performance; or, A Warm Go for the Gate Money.
356—Diamond Dick's Dago Dupes; or, The Bowery Boy and the "Has-Been."
357—Diamond Dick's Phantom Hand; or, The Mystery of the "Fly-by-night."
358—Diamond Dick's World-Beater; or, The Race for the Hurricane Handicap.
359—Diamond Dick's Boy Pards; or, The Boarding House Puzzle.
360—Diamond Dick and the Safe-Crackers; or, Two-Spot's Level Best.
361—Diamond Dick's Last Call; or, Run Down on the Ferry.
362—Diamond Dick's Four-Hands-Round; or, A Game of Keeps in the Catskills.
363—Diamond Dick's Line-Up; or, The Young Sport's Banner Play.
364—Diamond Dick's Web-Foot Pard; or, Queer Work on the Hurricane Deck.
365—Diamond Dick's Run to Denver; or, Old Sixty's Last Mix-Up.
366—Diamond Dick Among the Pueblos; or, A Bold Play for a Big Stake.
367—Diamond Dick's Dark Chase; or, Captured by Flash-Light.
368—Diamond Dick on the Bar-X Range; or, Captain Fan and the Rustlers.
369—Diamond Dick as a Deputy Sheriff; or, Fighting the Mob at Piute.
370—Diamond Dick's Pair of Winners; or, Two-Spot and Nixey's Double-Play.
371—Diamond Dick in Old Mexico; or, The Gold-Bugs of Guanajay.
372—Diamond Dick's Treasure-Trove; or, The Secret of the Great Stone Idol.
373—Diamond Dick in the Field; or, Handsome Harry's Peril.
374—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, New Pard; or, Brick-Top Ben and His Little Joker.
375—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Roughest Trail; or, Foiling the Governor's Foes.
376—Diamond Dick, Jr., and the Black Riders; or, Saved by a Daring Leap.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, New York.

BRAVE AND BOLD WEEKLY

Contains Biggest and Best Stories of All Descriptions.
A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EACH WEEK.

24—The Bicycle Boys of Blueville; or, Joe Masterson's Unknown Enemies. By the author of "Bicycle and Gun."
25—Submarine Mart; or, The Wonderful Cruise of the "Fire-Fly." By the author of "Second-Sight Sam."
26—Jockey Sam; or, Riding for Fortune. By Ernest A. Young.
27—Frank Warren, Alchemist; or, The Diamond Makers. By Weldon J. Cobb.
28—The Jail Breakers of Shirley; or, The Boy Who Dared and Won. By Matt Royal.
29—Robert Brendon, the Bell Boy; or, Under the Hypnotic Spell. By John De Morgan.
30—The Mysterious Millionaire; or, The Queerest Job on Record. By Matt Royal.
31—Saved by His Luck; or, What Followed the Yacht Race. By Cornelius Shea.
32—The Chance of His Life; or, The Messenger Boy Who Got There. By Howard Haskins.
33—Upright and Honest; or, Harry Hale's Struggle to Success. By Henry Harrison Haines.
34—Two Young Inventors; or, The Treasure of Three River Mountain. By William Bennett.
35—The Life of the School; or, Out for Fun and Fortune. By author of "Bicycle Boys of Blueville."
36—Tom Hamlin, Mesmerist; or, The Boy With the Iron Will. By Matt Royal.
37—The Puzzle of Panther's Run; or, Leon Gale's Triumph. By Frank Earl.
38—A Girl Crusoe; or, The Wonder of the Isle of Gnomes. By Cornelius Shea.
39—The Cash Boy; or, From Prison to Fortune. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
40—The Electric Eye; or, Helped by the X-Rays. By Weldon J. Cobb.
41—The Boy and the Deacon; or, Enemies for Life. By Harrie Irving Hancock.
42—Louis Stanhope, Hero; or, The Boy Who Disappeared. By John De Morgan.
43—Mat, the Fugitive; or, The Witch Doctor's Prophecy. By John H. Whitson.
44—The Boy Broker; or, Fighting the Financiers. By Paul Rand.
45—Adrift in New York; or, Dodger and Florence Braving the World. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
46—A Lad of Steel; or, Running Down the Tiger. By Matt Royal.
47—Which is Which? or, Winning a Name by Proxy. By Weldon J. Cobb.
48—A Dashing Fire Laddie; or, The Heroism of Dick Macy. By John De Morgan.
49—The Boy Wonder; or, Dick Gray's Marvelous Pump. By Matt Royal.
50—Labor's Young Champion; or, The Great Mill Strike. By the author of "A Lad of Steel."
51—Into Unknown Lands; or, The Secret of the Enchanted Diamond. By Cornelius Shea.
52—Two Brave Chums; or, The Outlaws of Blackwater Gap. By the author of "Dick Hazel, Explorer."
53—The Crimson Cross; or, The Mystery of His Birth. By Bernard Maxwell.
54—Dean Dunham; or, The Waterford Mystery. By Horatio Alger, Jr.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William St., New York.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN THE WORLD

330—Nick Carter's Block Signal; or, Foiled in the Nick of Time.
331—Nick Carter's Thumb Clew; or, The Counterfeiter's False Move.
332—Nick Carter and the Blue Death; or, The Lost Car of the Denver Express.
333—Nick Carter and the Red Masks; or, The Mystery of Cab 21.
334—Nick Carter's Crooked Trail; or, The Plot for the Glassford Millions.
335—Nick Carter's False Clew; or, Playing the Dupe for Big Game.
336—Nick Carter's Drag Net; or, Forcing the Hands of the Secret Six.
337—Nick Carter's Death Photo; or, Revealed by a Camera.
338—Nick Carter and the Will Forgers; or, Playing for a Fortune.
339—Nick Carter and the Living Mask; or, Murdered Without a Mark.
340—Nick Carter's Night Watch; or, Working in the Dark.
341—Nick Carter's Chemical Test; or, Animal Blood or Human?
342—Nick Carter Within an Inch of His Life; or, The Mystery of the Pretty Typewriter.
343—Nick Carter and the Phantom of Poverty Lane; or, A Bundle of Tangled Clews.
344—Nick Carter Winning a Close Game; or, Bombshells in the Camp.
345—Nick Carter and the Prince of Stranglers; or, The Black Cord of the League.
346—Nick Carter On and Off the Scent; or, The Mysterious Tragedy of Herald Square.
347—Nick Carter on a Parisian Trail; or, In the Death Trap of the Silencers.
348—Nick Carter's Battle Against Odds; or, The Mystery of the Detroit Pawnbroker.
349—Nick Carter on His Mettle; or, The Trapping of Cool Kate.
350—Nick Carter's Life Chase; or, The Shot from Ambush.
351—Nick Carter's Chain of Guilt; or, The Robbery of Express No. 5.
352—Nick Carter and the Langworthy Treasure; or, The Strange Doings at the Ruined Fort.
353—Nick Carter Forging the Fetters; or, The Outwitting of a Clever Villain.
354—Nick Carter from Peril to Peril; or, The Crime of the Stagecoach.
355—Nick Carter Hemmed in by Enemies; or, Where Mystery Followed Mystery.
356—Nick Carter and the Yellow Spider's Web; or, 'Frisco's Most Sensational Case.
357—Nick Carter in a Finish Fight; or, Hunting Down the Mining Swindlers.
358—Nick Carter and the Triple Identity; or, Unraveling Mystery "47."
359—Nick Carter and the Queen of Diamonds; or, The Turns of Fortune's Wheel.
360—Nick Carter and the Missing Jewels; or, A Tale of Uncertain Clews.
361—Nick Carter's Great Success; or, The Hunting Down of Insurance Frauds.
362—Nick Carter's Search for a Motive; or, Why Mission Mike was Murdered.
363—Nick Carter's Double Capture; or, Seeking the Banker's Assassins.
364—Nick Carter's Capture of the Jenkins Brothers; or, The Whereabouts of Mr. Morton.
365—Nick Carter's Three Perils; or, A Story of Hypnotic Power.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, New York.

STREET & SMITH'S POPULAR 5c. LIBRARIES

LARGEST CIRCULATION IN AMERICA.

TIP TOP WEEKLY

The ideal publication for the American youth. Contains stories of the adventures of Frank merriwell, the famous Yale athlete, and Dick, his younger brother, who is the pride of Fardale Academy.

There are competitions continually running in its columns, whereby the successful teams may win complete outfits, including uniforms. The following is a list of the latest numbers:

353. Dick Merriwell Surprised; or, Cap'n Wiley's Wind Jammers.
354. Frank Merriwell's Quick Move; or, Cooling Off Cap'n Wiley.
355. Dick Merriwell's Red Friend; or, Old Joe Crowfoot to the Front.
356. Frank Merriwell's Nomads; or, Cap'n Wiley's Clever Work.
357. Dick Merriwell's Distrust; or, Meeting the Masked Champion.
358. Frank Merriwell's Grand Finish; or, The Independent Champions of America.

Greatest Detective Alive.

Nick Carter Weekly

No detective stories published can compare with those published in this library. Nick Carter has had innumerable thrilling adventures in which he was assisted by Chick and Patsy, two fine, intelligent young fellows. Boys, you ought to buy this publication every week and read about Nick's wonderful escapes and captures

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

346. Nick Carter On and Off the Scent; or, The Mysterious Tragedy at Herald Square.
347. Nick Carter on a Parisian Trail; or, The Death Trap of the "Silencers"
348. Nick Carter's Battle Against Odds; or, The Mystery of the Detroit Pawnbroker.
349. Nick Carter on His Metal; or, The Trapping of Cool Kate.
350. Nick Carter's Life Chase; or, The Shot From Ambush.
351. Nick Carter's Chain of Guilt; or, The Robbery of Express No. 5.

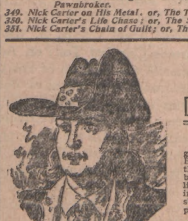
A Different Complete Story Every Week.

BRAVE AND BOLD

This line is sure to please every boy who likes variety. The stories are long, and detail the adventures of an entirely new set of characters each week. The authors are the best known, and have made excellent reputations by their highly interesting and original stories. Boys, if you want a treat, get this library every week.

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

33. Upright and Honest; or, Harry Hale's Struggle to Success.
By Henry Harrison Halses
34. Two Young Inventors; or, The Treasure of Three Pine Mountain.
By Bennett
35. The Life of the School; or, Out for Fun and Fortune.
By Author of "Bicycle Boys of Blueville."
36. Tom Hamlin, Mesmerist; or, The Boy With the Iron Will.
By Matt Royal Paterson
37. The Puzzle of Panther's Run; or, Leon Gale's Triumph.
By Frank Earle
38. A Girl Crusoe; or, The Wonder of the Isle of Gnomes.
By Cornelius Shea



STORIES OF THE FAR WEST.

Diamond Dick Weekly

These are stories about the great Diamond Dick and his son, Bertie. Every boy will be more than satisfied with these tales, because they are drawn true to life, and are extremely interesting. Diamond Dick is a dead shot, and never allows a desperado to get the drop on him.

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

359. Diamond Dick's Boy Pards; or, The Boarding House Puzzle.
360. Diamond Dick and the Safe Crackers; or, Two Spot's Level Best.
361. Diamond Dick's Last Call; or, Run Down or Run Up.
362. Diamond Dick's Four Hand's Round; or, A Game of Keeps in the Catskills.
363. Diamond Dick's Line Up; or, The Young Sport's Banner Play.
364. Diamond Dick's Web Foot Pard; or, Queer Work on the Hurricane Deck.

More Reading Matter Than Any Five-Cent Detective Library Published.

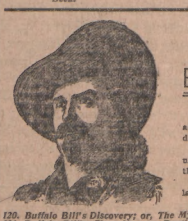
Young Broadbrim Weekly

Young Broadbrim is the shrewdest and most clever boy detective that ever lived. His marvelous strength and wonderful nerve enables him to penetrate where most men would fear to go.

All the tales of his adventures are absolutely new.

The following is a list of the latest numbers written especially for this line:

52. Young Broadbrim, the Boy Detective; or, The Old Quaker's Faithful Ally.
53. Young Broadbrim in Kansas City; or, What Was Found in the Flood
54. Young Broadbrim on an Aerial Trail; or, The Terrible Ordeal of Fire
55. Young Broadbrim and Company; or, Solving the Mysteries of Rockwood.
56. Young Broadbrim Triumphant; or, The Girl Cracksman.
57. Young Broadbrim Fighting an Unknown Power; or, A Scientific Murderer.



TALES OF FRONTIER ADVENTURE.

Buffalo Bill Stories

Every boy ought to read the adventures of Buffalo Bill, as detailed in this library.

They are full of lively adventure, and just the kind that thrills the heart of every true boy.

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

120. Buffalo Bill's Discovery; or, The Mystery of the Gold Treasure.
121. Buffalo Bill's Clean-Up; or, Routing the Rascals at Yellow Dust City.
122. Buffalo Bill's Pards of the Plains; or, The Dead Shot Four.
123. Buffalo Bill's Helping Hand; or, The Secret of Kid Glove Kate.
124. Buffalo Bill's Boy Pard; or, Captain Hyans and His Red Angels.
125. Buffalo Bill's Sacrifice; or, Waneta, the Indian Queen.

King of Detectives—NICK CARTER

READ ALL ABOUT HIM IN

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Thirty-two Large-sized Pages. Clear Type
Handsome Colored Covers

PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY

There is a certain charm about these stories that holds the reader's interest from cover to cover. No other detective stories can compare with them. The many hairbreadth escapes and thrilling adventures of Nick Carter, the hero, and his clever young assistants, "Chick," and "Patsy," are well worth reading. Boys, you ought to take this library every week . . . . . .

LATEST ISSUES.

350—Nick Carter's Life Chase; or, The Shot from Ambush.
351—Nick Carter's Chain of Guilt; or, The Robbery of Express No. 5.
352—Nick Carter and the Langworthy Treasure; or, The Strange Doings at the Ruined Fort.
353—Nick Carter Forging the Fetters; or, The Outwitting of a Clever Villain.
354—Nick Carter from Peril to Peril; or, The Crime of the Stage Coach.
355—Nick Carter Hemmed in by Enemies; or, Where Mystery Followed Mystery.
356—Nick Carter and the Yellow Spider's Web; or, Frisco's Most Sensational Case.
357—Nick Carter in a Finish Fight; or, Hunting Down the Mining Swindlers.
358—Nick Carter and the Triple Identity; or, Unravelling Mystery No. 47.
359—Nick Carter and the "Queen of Diamonds;" or, The Turn of Fortune's Wheel.

To be had from all newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, upon receipt of price, FIVE CENTS

STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York